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HERBART



HERBART  
AND THE HERBARTIAN THEORY  
OF EDUCATION  
A CRITICISM

BY

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GENERAL



## PREFATORY NOTE

THESE Lectures were delivered in the University of Edinburgh during the past winter session, and with the exception of the last and concluding lecture, are published as delivered. To the student of psychology, I need hardly mention my indebtedness to Dr. Stout for his luminous and able articles in *Mind* on the Herbartian Psychology, and also to his psychological writings generally. To the Herbartian educationalists, named and unnamed, who have been criticised in the following pages I owe no apology, since the aim of every true student of education should be to follow the truth wheresoever it may lead. To my revered teachers and friends, Professor Laurie and Professor Pringle-Pattison, I owe much more than can be expressed in a brief prefatory note, and the best

evidence of this is that the spirit of their teaching will be evident to every critical reader of the following pages. The general nature of the theory advanced in these lectures is but an exemplification and enlargement of the contention of Mr. Haldane in his recent Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews, that "when you are trying to trace the genesis of the development of a child's consciousness, you are driven away from the point of view"—which is called Presentationism—and that "it is purposes or ends which organise our immediate experience and give to it its appearance of reality."

The important thing for the educationist is to become fully aware that instruction is only a means to the realisation of the various purposes or ends of life, and that it is in the controlling and directing of education with a clear and explicit knowledge of the relation of the various ends to the supreme end that the work of teaching essentially consists. It needs also to be emphasised at the present day that educa-

tional practice is explicitly, but more often implicitly, based on educational theory, and that every educational theory is founded not merely on a psychology of mental development but on some philosophical theory as to the meaning and value of human life.

ALEX. DARROCH.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

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# HERBART

## AND THE HERBARTIAN THEORY OF EDUCATION

### LECTURE I

#### THE HERBARTIAN PSYCHOLOGY—THE FUNDAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

WITHIN recent years the theory of education set forth by Herbart and developed by his successors has received a considerable amount of attention. To some extent in the land of its birth, but more particularly in America, Herbartianism has become more or less of a craze, and work after work continues to be turned out applying the Herbartian solvent to all educational difficulties. In our own country it has found a footing, and while Herbartians of the extreme type are few in number, yet the theory underlies a good deal

of our educational thought, and pervades a good deal of our educational literature. From the educationalist who adopts the theory on grounds which he can more or less justify (though often not seeing the full logical outcome of the implied presuppositions), we have all degrees, down to the well-meaning persons whose cry is that the one thing needful is to make all school work interesting to our pupils, and who have, as a rule, no clear conception of what interest means, nor of the conditions by which it is evoked. In general, however, the advocates of the theory may be divided into two main types.

In the first place, in some quarters, the Herbartian ethic is loudly proclaimed as the only system which can afford the teacher real insight into the nature of the end towards which education should strive to form and fashion the pupil, and the Herbartian psychology is declared to be the only psychology which can yield a practical method for the guidance of the educator, and the only sure and safe basis for any system of pedagogics which builds on the solid ground of fact; and, in contrast,

opposing systems are supposed to have their foundations laid on grounds of a more or less vague and general nature. The Herbartian claims to deal with concrete experience, with the actual modes by which human experience and human knowledge develop, and in particular opposes the rational or transcendental psychologist on the ground that his method of looking at the human mind and its development yields results which are of no value for the use of the educational theorist, nor of any aid in the guidance of the practical teacher.<sup>1</sup> The rational psychologist is said to deal "with unchangeable presuppositions of mind," to take account of only the universal conditions of all knowing; and, while the educationalist may conform his work to these conditions, he cannot modify them any more than he can alter a law of nature. On the other hand, the educationalist who bases his theory upon some scientific, empirical, and deterministic psychology

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *e.g.* "Herbart's Outlines of Educational Doctrine," trans. by Lange and De Garmo, Introduction, p. 6.

is supposed to be able, in some mysterious way, to control the actual growth of our concrete experience without taking into account those universal conditions, those unchangeable presuppositions of the human mind. With this contention we shall afterwards deal. It arises out of a confusion of ideas. If a knowledge of the universal conditions of all knowing, without some knowledge of the particular forms in which it is realised, is empty, and therefore of no use in the guidance of the educator, so in like manner the so-called empirical facts of the psychologist are blind and of no value without some knowledge of the universal modes of synthesis by which they become a part of our concrete experience. Emphasis on the one aspect in educational theory leads to the identification of education with mere instruction, as emphasis on the other leads to the confusion of education with a bare and empty discipline and training.

In the second place, we have within the Herbartian camp another set of adherents who prefer to follow the spirit of their master rather than *definitely* pin their faith to his doctrines with their

metaphysical and psychological foundations.<sup>1</sup> For them, Herbartianism is rather a set of ethical convictions than a system of doctrines. They are convinced, *e.g.* that instruction is of supreme importance in the work of education, and in the formation of character; that the line of demarcation usually drawn between secular and sacred subjects is theoretically unsound and practically baneful in its consequences; and, above all, they believe that the moral regeneration of mankind lies in the fostering of a many-sided interest, and that the kingdom of Heaven will be realised on this earth when we turn out our pupils with large, well-rounded, and internally coherent systems of ideas, or, to use the Herbartian technical term, apperception-masses. With this particular section of the school, it is usual to have the assertion made that the psychology of Herbart is not so fundamental to his theory of education as is commonly supposed, and that the main thing for the educator is to enter into the spirit of its founder, and to be fully assured of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Herbartian Psychology," by Adams, chap. iii.

the convictions enumerated above.<sup>1</sup> But we may ask: Are the convictions mere convictions? If so, for the old empiricism in educational theory and in educational practice which Herbartianism seeks to remove, we are offered an empiricism newer and perhaps better, but still an empiricism. If, on the other hand, the convictions are not mere convictions—for they can hardly, so to speak, hang in the air—but claim to have a foundation in the nature of human experience and human thought, then it is incumbent upon their advocates to state the nature of the ethical and psychological grounds upon which they base their assertions that knowledge and the formation of a many-sided “interest” are the chief things to be considered in the work of education and in the formation of character. At any rate, until they reject the ethical and psychological grounds upon which their educational convictions are ostensibly founded, it is quite within the right of the critic to point out that the basis will not support the superstructure, and that the new elements introduced are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *e.g.* “The Student’s Herbart,” by Hayward, p. 8.



of an alien nature, and not consistent with the original assumptions. And that, if these convictions are to be justified, we must seek to base them upon an ethic and psychology different in nature from that of Herbart.

Now, in order to understand the nature of the educational theory of Herbart, it is necessary to know the main principles of his psychology and ethics, and to comprehend clearly the point of departure from which the system starts. In the first place, it will be our aim to state the essential doctrines of the system in so far as they bear on educational theory, and in particular to state exactly and definitely the meaning and limitations of such conceptions as apperception and many-sided interest, which are the dominating educational categories in the Herbartian theory. Much harm is done, both in educational theory and in educational practice, by the loose and inaccurate use of terms such as "interest"; and it is important that we should understand clearly what these and similar terms connote.

The Herbartian psychology, on its negative side, was mainly directed against

\* — the old faculty psychology. Just as Locke had thought that the doctrine of innate ideas was the great stumbling-block in the way of the clear understanding of things, so, in like manner, Herbart considered that a similar charge could be laid at the door of the theory which supposed the mind to be possessed of various powers or activities. Such a conception, carried over into the educational field, gives rise to the belief that certain subjects are specially suited for training the memory, while others are supposed to be best fitted for cultivating the imagination ; while still others exercise and discipline the intellect. Now, it is against this error that the attack of Herbart is mainly directed, and in this respect he is at one with the English Associationist school, who attempt to explain the mental life as gradually built up from certain elementary atomic states, and to show that all mental connection is ultimately reducible to mere association. But Herbart goes further, and lays his finger definitely on the nature of the error on which the assumption of separate faculties is founded. This is to be traced to the



fallacy of supposing that the introspective method is the only valid method in psychology, and to the inherent inaccuracy in the nature of that method. In introspection we note the prominent and outstanding characteristics of our mental states. "Self-observation," he says, "mutilates the facts of consciousness in the very act of apprehending them, tears them from their context, and hands them over to a disorderly abstraction which finds no resting-place until it has arrived at the highest genera."<sup>1</sup> The process of classification being completed, it is found that these generalisations are of no use in the explanation of particular phenomena, and the tendency arises to treat them as real forces active in the production of the particular effects. Instead of explaining the mental life, the faculty psychology leads to the belief that the unity of the mental life is ultimately inexplicable, and that we must be content with the conception of the mind as exercising different functions. But a second objection may be urged against the method of introspection. Not only

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Prof. Stout in *Mind*, No. 51, p. 324 *et seq.*

does it tend to mutilate the facts and to take note only of the prominent characteristics in our mental states, but it also fails to notice those dim and obscure manifestations of consciousness which in many cases are the differentiating elements in determining mental change. The method of introspection alone, accordingly, is not sufficient; and this insufficiency is evident in another direction. By introspection we become aware of certain facts of a self-contradictory character due to their detachment from the connections which alone make them intelligible. In particular, the fact of an Ego or self is given in consciousness, and yet the conception of an Ego is loaded with contradictions. The self cannot be identified with any of its particular states, since it is the centre to which they are all referred. And again, apart from its manifestation in such or such a particular state, it is nothing—it possesses no mark by which it can be distinguished except its own self-awareness, and this for Herbart involved an inner contradiction. It is this contradiction which forces him to distinguish

afterwards between "apperceiving" and "apperceived" masses of ideas in self-consciousness.

Now the method of Herbart, here as elsewhere, is to frame such hypotheses as will remove the contradictions and incoherences revealed by introspection; and if, further, these hypotheses, while removing the contradictions, do no great violence to the evidence which introspection furnishes, and, moreover, can be applied in the explanation of further facts and be justified on grounds independent of psychology, then Herbart supposes that this will justify the validity of the method adopted.

Equally with the rejection of the theory of the soul as manifesting a plurality of activities does Herbart reject the Kantian idea of an Ego and a synthetic activity of Reason which is active throughout in the construction or reconstruction of experience.

According to Herbart the soul is intrinsically a simple, unchanging being, originally without any plurality of states, activities, or powers. It is at first a distinctionless unity with the bare power of reacting\* upon impressions, but the original reactions

having taken place it, so to speak, becomes passive, and as Lotze points out, "everything further that happens in it, the formation of its conceptions, the development of its faculties, the settlement of the principles upon which it acts,"<sup>1</sup> all follow as mechanical results from the initial reactions.

It is important clearly to understand the starting-point of Herbart, for on the definite apprehension of this depends the understanding of the remainder of his psychological system, and it is only by keeping the initial assumptions before us, that we can fully realise where this theory would lead us in our educational theory and practice.

From the theory of a plurality of activities Herbart goes to the other extreme, and denies all activity to the soul except this bare power of reacting upon the occurrence of the original stimuli from without: thereafter the soul is simply the arena in which certain mechanical results effect themselves, and the development of the mental life is throughout explained as due to one single kind of process—

<sup>1</sup> Lotze, "Metaphysics," vol. ii. p. 238 (Eng. Trans.).

a process of assimilation, association, or apperception between the varying mental contents. From the position that there is no wholly unconditioned activity of the soul, Herbart passes to the other extreme, that there is no act of the soul which is not wholly conditioned by the previously existing mental content: everything follows necessarily from the reactions set up by the attractions and repulsions of the various ideas. As Lotze<sup>1</sup> rather happily puts it: The soul never again shows itself irritable or volcanic enough to interfere with the further course of its development, but is content to remain passive, and view its inevitable determination along the destined lines.

The proposition then which forms the basis of the Herbartian psychology is that presentations or "ideas" are the ultimate elements of the mental life, and that the unity and complexity which subsequently occur, arise from the interaction and combination of these primary elements. So far, Herbart is at one with the doctrines of the English Associationist school. But he differs from them in the way in which he

<sup>1</sup> Lotze, "Metaphysics," p. 238.

conceived and explained the ultimate principles of combination and interaction among presentations, and in the fact that he applies the category of mechanical causation in a more thorough-going and systematic way to the explanation of the facts of the mental life. For Locke and Hume the question is : How, starting from simple atomic sensations, do these combine to form the unity of the mental life? For Herbart the question rather is : How is it that the soul, which is originally a distinctionless unity, takes on the character of plurality and distinction? That is, starting from the soul as characterless, as bare, having only this mere power of reacting against the original stimuli received by means of the senses, how can we explain the distinctions and differences which arise in the nature of the soul? and, at the same time, what is the nature of the identity which pervades the whole? For, however we may explain the phenomenon, there is a self which in some way or other remains identical throughout its various manifestations ; or, in Herbartian terms, there must be some one apperception mass which is apperceptive to every other apperceived



mass. This is a problem which our educational Herbartians seem to think of little consequence, for, as a rule, they neglect the consideration of this aspect of the theory. But it is important not only from the point of view of psychological theory, but also important, and much more so, from the point of view of educational practice. For if the self is nothing, or reduced (as we shall afterwards see) to a mere general abstraction, then individuality, and personality and moral responsibility become fictions; and these, although they may for methodological purposes be neglected in the working out of an abstract and mechanical account of the mental life, cannot be left out of educational theory, for they are the most important of educational categories.

But not only does Herbartianism reduce the elements of the mental life to presentations, and explain mental development and mental complexity by their interaction, but it reduces feeling and volition to secondary products formed by the interaction of presentation masses. And here it is well to remember in our educational reference, that, although the Herbartian

often speaks of the efficiency of the will and of the necessity of training our pupils to act vigorously, for him the will is nothing but a general name for certain movements among the presentation masses, and "freedom of the will is but the assured supremacy of the strongest masses of ideas over single affections or impressions."<sup>1</sup> Instead of volition being regarded as due to the activity of a self or subject which identifies itself with and seeks to realise its various ends, we in its place are offered certain interactions in the psychological mechanism. All action, all conduct is thus conceived to be reflex in its character, and feeling, instead of being regarded as a coefficient of the success or non-success of the subject in the realisation of its own purposive ends, is regarded as a mere product of the interaction among the presentation masses. It is interesting as showing the thoroughgoing mechanical explanation of the mental life furnished by Herbart to consider the manner in which he explains the various degrees of difference between our feeling-tones. We may notice three

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ueberweg's "History of Philosophy," p. 237.



grades. In the first place, we may have a merely neutral state, which on the emergence of other conditions may pass, on the one hand, into the state of pleasure or into the state of pain. But, in order to understand this, we must first of all give an account of the principles by which, starting from certain elementary presentations, the process of combining them into presentation masses is performed.

Presentations differ from each other in quality in three distinct ways. In the first place, they may be exactly similar, as *e.g.* my sensation of red is the same as the idea of my sensation of the same colour yesterday. In this case we have a fusion of the two ideas. They attract one another and combine to form one total presentation, but the important point for us to notice in our educational reference is that, here as elsewhere, there is no identifying nor relating activity of the subject present: the ideas simply rush together on account of their inherent and inexplicable attraction for each other. The ideas are supposed to be active forces mutually attracting each other. On the other hand, two co-presented ideas may be contrary to

each other; they may belong to the same qualitative continuum, as *e.g.* two shades of colour or two tastes. In this case we have not attraction but a process of repulsion set up between the two presentations, or, to make use of the Herbartian technical term, we have mutual arrest, and this may finally result in the total exclusion of one of the elements from consciousness, or in their partial fusion, as when one shade of colour combines with another and thus forms a colour presentation different in kind from both. Mutual arrest may vary in the result produced, from total exclusion on the one hand to almost complete fusion on the other. Here again it is well to note that this result is not produced by the relating activity of the subject. It is not because the subject cannot, in the furtherance of its end of making knowledge consistent, bring together, as the predicates of a single object, two contrary predicates at the same time that this mutual arrest takes place, but the ideas in themselves are conceived as the sole agents in the realisation of all mental combination. In the third and final case, we may have two presentations or ideas

belonging to different qualitative continua, as *e.g.* the sweetness of an orange may co-exist with the presentation of its colour. In this case the presentations show themselves manifestly indifferent to each other's charms—they are said to be disparate, and meekly and quietly become complicated in each other's further existence. By this three-fold process of fusion, arrest, and complication, the soul gradually becomes differentiated into distinct and different groups of presentation-masses. And these presentation-masses thus formed act as a total force in the fusion with, or the repelling of, further presentations.

Let us pause for a moment here and ask ourselves by what process of thought did Herbart reach this remarkable result. How does he come to think of ideas or presentations as being possessed of activity, and of manifesting this in various directions. The answer is obvious; the synthetic activity of the Ego is transferred and read into the nature of the particular ideas. The identifying and combining activity of the self is thought to be resident in each particular idea,

and we must not only conceive of them as active, but as in some way or other aware of their activity and its purpose or end, if we are to put any intelligible meaning upon the process ; or, on the other hand, we must conceive of the whole process as a blind, mechanical result effected on the soul and not by the soul. In short, the differences in the context or meaning of ideas is thought to indicate corresponding differences in the nature of the presentative activities ; and in our educational theory and in our educational practice, this logically leads to the idea that education is a mere mechanical joining of idea to idea, and that it is a process effected without the activity of the pupil. The one aim of the educator accordingly is to endeavour to perform this mechanical building up in the simplest and easiest manner possible, and thus he will make education interesting to the child—if indeed there be a child at all in this theory, and not a mere receptacle of ideas. In the sequel, I hope to be able to show that, among the more extreme and more consistent upholders of the theory, this result has actually been reached. For we have the denial

of the value of formal studies and the glorification of mere instruction until, in some cases, the whole aim of education has been considered to be the widening or extending of the circle of ideas effected by the sole agency of the teacher, and such a view of education has not inaptly been called "Didactive Materialism." Didactive, because it implicitly denies what Rousseau so strongly insisted on, the self-teaching of the pupil; materialistic, because it denies the presence of any spiritual activity in the building up of knowledge or in the work of education.

Having seen that Herbart reduces the ultimate elements of the mental life to presentations, and that he explains the complexity and differentiation which subsequently arise in the soul as due solely to the mechanical connections that obtain between the single ideas or presentations, let us now consider the account which he gives of the other constituents of the mental life. For if the Herbartian dictum be true, that knowledge is primary and feeling and volition but secondary products of the interaction of ideas, then this must have important bearings on the theory and

practice of education. We shall then cease to speak of training the will or of cultivating the emotions, but shall rather direct our energies to the instilling into the mind appropriate ideas, confident that when this is done, every other result will follow.

Let us consider the account of Feeling. An arrested presentation, produced either by the working of the physiological mechanism or aroused by the inner working of the psychological mechanism on the removal of the arresting conditions, emerges into consciousness, and no further modification of consciousness is involved in the process, that is to say, the feeling-tone is neither of a pleasant nor of a painful kind; it simply is neutral. The other constituents of consciousness for the time being, the existing presentation masses, are simply indifferent to the presence of the new-comer; and, while they do not extend the hand of welcome, they are not so uncourteous as to be actually hostile to his presence. But if the new presentation not merely appears or emerges into consciousness in the manner described above, but is acted on



by allied presentations; if it is warmly welcomed as a friend, and if the total force is more than is actually necessary to produce the result of bringing it into clear and distinct consciousness, *this* manifests itself as pleasurable feeling. Similarly, painful feeling arises in so far as the mutual arrest of presentations has a counterpart in consciousness which does not affect the nature and distinctness of the content presented; or more simply, we have the painful feeling when the mechanical energy of the apperceiving system, while sufficient to raise the new presentate to clear and distinct consciousness, is insufficient to bring about complete fusion. One remark I should like to make here in order to avoid misapprehension and misunderstanding. The facts are as Herbert describes them. We are conscious of this pleasurable feeling when a new idea coalesces easily and without hindrance with our previously existing system of ideas. We have a pleasant process as long as the identification of the new with the old is easily effected, and in the opposite case we have the feeling of tension or pain when this process of

identification is hindered or obstructed. But what must be considered is the explanation of the process. This is what is important both in psychological theory and in educational practice. Must we accept Herbart's explanation, or must we rather consider that we have here not the mere mechanical action of presentations, but rather the activity of a self whose pleasure it is whose pain it is; and that the feeling of pleasure on the one hand is the resultant of the subject realising its end or purpose, and, on the other hand, that the feeling of pain arises from the thwarting of the ends which the self sets before it as ends which it would realise. If this is so, then not knowledge but self-activity must be the fundamental educational category; and while paying attention to the means by which our various ends are realised, we shall consider the ends and their nature to be of fundamental importance.

The same difficulty in the Herbartian theory is brought out if we consider his account of Attention. This is explained as a process due wholly to the interaction of presentations, and the teleological



aspect of the attention process fails to receive any notice. According to Herbart, when we say that we have directed our attention to an idea, *e.g.* to *b*, what has happened is merely that *b* through an increase in its own strength, due either to the intensity of the physiological stimulus or to its alliance with other presentations, has raised itself into consciousness above the rest of the other presentates, *i.e.* it has either through its original or derived intensity forced its way into the focus of consciousness and expelled the previous occupant. That is, here again attention is a function of the ideas and not a function of the self or subject. But when we attend to an object we do not desire thereby to increase its presentative effect, the heightening of its mere intensity in consciousness; but what we seek is a growth in clearness, in distinctness, and this, as Lotze points out, rests in all cases on the perception of the relations which exist between its individual constituents. That is to say, attention has a teleological aspect; it is motivated by the end of clearly understanding the object presented. Even when a presen-

tation succeeds in entering the focus of consciousness through its own intensity, whether original or due to its connection with the existing contents of consciousness, it fails to receive attention, unless we make attention equivalent to mere awareness, or being conscious generally. It only becomes attended to when there is aroused the active attitude of the subject. As Mr. Bradley points out: "We may will and may attend actively, because we have first of all been compelled to 'attend' passively, because we have somehow been impressed or laid hold of by an idea. And if attention is used in this improper sense, we often will because we have attended, and do not attend in the least because we will."<sup>1</sup> On the Herbartian theory we have mere arrestment, mere detention, of the subject, and according to the resultant effect of this detention the subject acts in this or in that way. From the well-known fact that ideas often lay hold of us in this passive way—entering the focus of consciousness through the intensity of the original

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, No. 41 (new series), p. 29: see also Laurie's "Institutes of Education," Lecture XVII.

presentations or through alliance with others—it is assumed that this is not only true in all cases of attention but is a *complete* explanation of the process. But active attention is present and only present wherever an end, external or internal, practical, imaginative, or theoretical, involves in and for its realisation the maintenance and support of an ideal object before me and in me.<sup>1</sup> I wish to solve a problem or to construct a diagram. The end desired forces me to attend to and keep in consciousness the idea of the means necessary for the realisation of the particular end. It is not a function of the ideas, but of the self or will, and involves the realisation of an end or purpose in, by, and for the satisfaction of the self, or, as Mr. Bradley has insisted, we have only *active* attention when there is the realisation of an idea with which the self identifies itself. But while wishing clearly to distinguish between active and passive attention, or between mere detention and attention, I have no desire to minimise the importance of the truth of the Herbartian doctrine that in education we

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Mind*, No. 41 (new series), p. 8.

must endeavour to present our subject so as to arouse this passive attention or pre-occupation ; but let me add that we have not begun the work of education, either in our pupils or in ourselves, until we have passed beyond this stage, and evoked the *active* attention of the child. And this is not effected merely by presenting the new ideas in such a manner that their entrance into the focus of consciousness may be effected in the easiest manner possible. However, in the insistence that any and every attention-process can only be maintained in so far as there is involved the operation or evolution of a system of ideas, or, in Herbartian phraseology, in so far as an apperceptive process is set up in the mind, the theory points out an undeniable truth for the guidance of the teacher. The duration of the process depends upon this factor ; but the error lies in supposing that the attention-processes are mechanically effected in the soul—that they arise and are solely to be explained by the reaction set up between particular ideas or systems of ideas and other systems. On the contrary, it must be maintained that in every case

of *active* attention there is present an end or purpose, theoretical or practical, and that the idea or purpose is the active agent in determining the evolution of the apperceptive system, and the intensity of the attention-process depends upon the intensity with which we seek to realise any particular end. If neglect of the means by which attention operates is to be avoided, so in a similar manner we must not forget that the mere account of the means is not sufficient, and that, as Professor Münsterberg has so strongly insisted, "carelessness in the teleological part makes the synthesis just as dilettantic and useless as ignorance about the causal material."<sup>1</sup> We must fully grasp that here, L as in other parts of the system, Herbart gives us a mere mechanical account of the mental life, and that such a mechanical interpretation of attention is empty and unmeaning apart from a knowledge of the ends which the will or self seeks to realise. If we look at the 2 mental life from the point of view of the individual apperipient, and not from the outside in this abstract way, we shall find

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Münsterberg's "Psychology and Life," p. 139.

that it is the ends which the individual seeks to realise which govern and control. There is no mere mechanical stream of consciousness, but everywhere we find a Self active in the determination of mental change.

The subject of attention is important in the theory of Herbart, for when his account of that factor in the mental life is clearly understood, it enables us to comprehend more clearly the doctrines of apperception and of interest, which are his fundamental educational categories.

But before explaining and discussing these in our next lecture, it may be well to answer an objection which may possibly arise out of this account of the nature of the soul, and especially in our account of the doctrine of attention. In many Herbartian writers there is a distinct tendency to speak with the vulgar about the question of attention. That is, we have the terms will and attention used as if they implied the presence of something else than a mere process, and the objection which may be urged is that some Herbartian writers do postulate an Ego or self or will which is



present throughout the whole process of development.

True, some of them do make mention of the soul, *e.g.* Lange and De Garmo,<sup>1</sup> and remind us that the masses of ideas are not to be regarded as active independent existences, but rather as the means employed by the soul that knows and wills, or they introduce the term Will; apparently for very much the same reason as Kant was said to have introduced the idea of God into his system, in order to satisfy the conscience of his servant Lampe. But they make no constructive use of the principle: are wholly employed in explaining the mechanism, and insisting on the ethical and spiritual significance of the process of assimilation or apperception, as if all that were required for the realisation of the ethical and spiritual life were to supply the appropriate presentations: *ex hypothesi* the presentations do the rest.

In concluding this lecture let me give you an example of this ambiguous use of terms. In a well-known work on the

<sup>1</sup> *Cf. e.g.* Lange's "Apperception"; De Garmo's "Herbart" (Great Educator Series).

Herbartian psychology we have the statement made that "Attention cannot create masses; it can only give masses a chance to rise into consciousness."<sup>1</sup> I attend to an object, but the attention-process can only be started and maintained in so far as a system of ideas is aroused and operative in the assimilation of the new presentate. If, however, we keep strictly to the Herbartian theory, we must say that attention is only present where there is a process, and this and nothing else is meant by attention; but when we speak of attention giving the masses a chance to rise into consciousness we are using attention in another sense. The attitude of consciousness here is one of striving, of endeavouring to reach an end. It is the teleological aspect of the process that is here meant, and this view of attention is inconsistent with the theory as laid down by Herbart. You cannot on the one hand have an account of attention in which the process is explained as throughout externally and mechanically determined, and, on the other hand, an

<sup>1</sup> "Herbartian Psychology," Adams, p. 259.



account of the process which involves the element of self-determination.

And in general you cannot, as some Herbartian writers think they are able to do, superimpose a theory of the will, the self-realisation of whose ends is to be of primary importance, upon a theory of the mental life which denies all spontaneity to the soul, and which shows the mental life to be throughout, to its very inmost fibre, externally determined.

As a methodological device you may neglect the aspect of self-activity; but you must remember that the results reached by looking at the mental life in this abstract way are also of the same nature, and that, therefore, the advice they furnish to the educator must be similarly limited in its nature. And before you can apply these results to the guidance of educational practice, you must take into account the nature and value of the elements abstracted from, and what difference they make in the results when they are re-introduced.

## LECTURE II

### DOCTRINES OF APPERCEPTION; OF INTEREST; OF THE SELF

IN this lecture I propose to consider the meaning and implications of the Herbartian theory of Apperception, and then to pass on to the discussion of Interest, and to the explanation which Herbart gives of the self.

Apperception in the Herbartian theory is the process by which a presentation-mass, or a system of ideas, assimilates with relatively unstable groups, or single ideas fusing with like and repressing antagonistic elements. Or, apperception is the process by which individual perceptions, ideas, or complexes of ideas, are brought into relation to our previously existing system of ideas, and assimilating with them are thus raised to greater *clearness* and *distinctness*. There is a difference between these two definitions, but they both agree

in affirming that the process is one of assimilation, in which the new is fused and incorporated with the old. There is nothing *new*, nothing *alarming* about the doctrine of apperception. Its fundamental truth is as old as Plato, and has received little fresh illumination in recent times from the scores of volumes which have been written about it. It might be passed over with little or no comment, were it not that the Herbartians conceive of the whole of our mental development as capable of explanation by, and due solely and entirely to, this one process; and as a consequence establish their method of education upon this *single* basis.

Perception may be distinguished from Apperception, although the distinction, it seems to me, is not absolute, but one solely of degree. In perception we are simply aware of an object, but in apperception we become conscious of its significance or meaning, we notice it—and this significance varies according to the differing mental contents of the persons perceiving. This truth has been elaborated at great length by some of the school, but its simple statement is sufficient. It is

more important to note certain classifications of the process. In the first place, we have the division into *outer* and *inner* apperception. In the former case, the recently or newly assimilated presentate is the resultant of some physiological stimulus, *i.e.* it is given in sensation. In the latter case the new presentate is reproduced by the internal working of the psychological mechanism. And here we must suppose that some comparatively weak and unstable group of ideas gains a temporary advantage over some more relatively stable and permanent group, and as a consequence is enabled to emerge into consciousness, and thus to enter into relations of fusion and antagonism, with the pre-existing group or groups. We are all aware of this phenomenon, *e.g.* some grief, which we are able to banish from our minds when we are actively engaged in business, finds its opportunity when we are freed from the absorption of work, and soon enters into relationships of antagonism and fusion with the thoughts which rise to greet and to banish it. Now in our educational reference we must keep this fact always in

mind, that distracting thoughts are ever clamouring for entrance into the child's consciousness, and that they will find harbour there unless his *active* attention to the subject in hand is maintained. But by far the most important distinction for us is between voluntary and involuntary apperception. This distinction is based on the fact that in some cases the greater attracting force is the new presentate, and in other cases the presentation-mass with which it finally becomes incorporated. As we have already indicated, apperception is the sole constant condition, and not only so, the sole condition of the attention process. You must then clearly understand that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary apperception is not a distinction between a process in which there is explicit the idea of an end or purpose to be achieved, and one in which there is no such explicit idea. Much less are you to suppose that this is a distinction between a process in which a unitary and central will or self is engaged and one in which it is not. It is a distinction between two kinds of detention—between two forms of passive attention. An object may enter the focus



of consciousness in either of two ways—it may by its own inherent strength make a connection with some pre-existing content, or, through its alliance with a pre-existing content, it may receive an increase in intensity sufficient to bring it into the focus. In the alliance the new-comer may or may not be the better half, but it must be the one or the other, and the nature of the alliance depends on the amount of affection for its mate which the new-comer brings into the union. And even if we grant that the apperception-mass identified for the time being with the self is the apperipient in the process which is termed voluntary, yet the union is conceived as a mere mechanical fusion in which the particular empirical self exerts the greater attracting power. We may fully admit the truth which underlies this, and yet at the same time object to the mode of explanation. But to realise it in this way is to see how purely mechanical is the explanation given of the whole process.

Now in considering the doctrine of apperception we must admit that the process is one which is involved in all knowing ;

that it is an aspect from which each and every process of knowing can be viewed. Whether in identifying or subsuming or comparing, there is this process of linking new with old—for knowledge grows and extends by the operation of the Law of Identity. Further, it must be admitted that all perception of objects receives significance through the inter-connection with previously existing systems of ideas, and that the life of each and all of us is coloured and determined by the various systems of ideas which we have gradually formed in the course of our experience of the world of men and things. The Herbartian theory has laid emphasis on, and given us a full and fresher statement of, the fact, that one of the main principles which psychology lends to the theory of education as its starting-point is that all new knowledge should be a development of previous knowledge, and that if a new fact or a new idea is presented which fails to find some corresponding link in the child's mind, then it fails to be apprehended ; and it must be so connected if our teaching is to be successful. In all this we have no fault to find. Here again it is not

the nature of the facts that is in question but their explanation. Apperception, like attention, is conceived as a purely mechanical process effected on the mind and not by the mind. And between attention and apperception no distinction can be drawn on this theory except between the initial stages of the process and the process itself.

Apperception is *the* condition of attention, and when realised there is no distinction between the two processes. In the Herbartian theory we must conceive of the mind as an arena in which apperception masses are ever contending—ever re-uniting amongst themselves. Such a mental condition, if ever it is realised at all, is realised in those abnormal states in which the power of self-control is almost entirely lost. In the mind of the drunkard, in the mind of the insane, there is often realised this ever-seizing hold of the subject by this or that idea—this mad play of ideas and presentation masses. But in the normal case, the apperception processes are but means to an end, and we must, at least for educational purposes, conceive of the mental life as a process directed and controlled by the idea of an



end or purpose. And just as we saw in considering the process of attention, that we must clearly distinguish between passive attention, in which the subject is laid hold of by the impression—in which we have mere detention, and active attention characterised by the inquiring attitude which the subject takes up towards the object. So in like manner we must clearly discriminate between a *merely* passive apperception process and the process of active apperception. In the former case, which is partially realised in our day-dreaming, the subject is carried along the stream of consciousness. The interference of the subject in the stream is at a minimum, and, let me add here, that this is a condition which we may produce in the minds of our pupils to some extent by making our teaching of such a kind that the matter is too easily assimilated into the child's mind; it requires then little or no effort on the part of the child. We may by this procedure make our education interesting in the Herbartian sense. We may produce an apperceiving machine which responds easily and smoothly to the

call of the teacher, and yet fail to create that stable and permanent interest which is, or ought to be, the outcome of our educational efforts.

On the other hand, in *active* apperception we have present the idea of an end or aim which is gradually realised by the process. Our ends and purposes may be, nay often are, inconsistent with each other. But the teleological aspect is the more important in our educational reference. Not only must we conceive of the process as guided by the idea of an explicit end or purpose, but we must also conceive of the presence throughout the whole process of an active self. The identifying, subsuming, and comparing processes do not effect themselves on the mind, but are results of the functioning of the self or agent. In other words, we must conceive of a synthetic activity of the Ego manifested throughout the whole process, and by means of its activity binding together the mere facts into systems according to their quantitative, qualitative, and causal identities. The presenting of materials in such a way that this synthetic process may be best effected is

only a condition, a necessary condition if you will, by which the process can be set in operation ; but it is not the process nor the essential nature of the process, nor is it *the* essential condition without which the process cannot take place. It may be present, and yet the activity of the child may not be aroused. The essential condition lies in the subjective worth which the end has for the child. This may be something extrinsic to the nature of the end itself, or it may fall within the end, and therefore be intrinsic to the end or purpose. A child's active attention may be directed to the understanding of an object by the desire of pleasing his teacher, or by a spirit of emulation, and in both cases the subjective *cause* which sets in operation an active apperception process is something extrinsic to the end desired, or we may have the process set up by the natural curiosity of the child to know. In education we must keep in mind the twofold nature of the process of knowledge. In all knowing there is a "given" produced by the working of the psycho-physical mechanism, and there is a process of active synthetic reconstruction of the

“given.” Education involves this twofold process of instructing and training ;—of a given and of the elaboration of the given through and by the activity of the Ego. And you can no more carry on the work of Education by neglect of the one factor than by neglect of the other. Education implies not merely the storing of the mind with knowledge, however carefully prepared for easy assimilation, but also the evoking of the active functioning of the self. The teacher must fully realise this fact if his work is to be successful. Knowledge grows and extends by the active perception of identities amidst differences. We form our apperceptive systems by bringing into activity the relating identifying function of the Ego, and the great aim of our educational efforts is to train and develop this power. And as, on the one hand, the Herbartians lay the emphasis upon the one aspect of our mental life, so in like manner the extreme advocates of the Heuristic method of teaching lay the emphasis on the other, but the truth lies in neither extreme, but in realising clearly the twofold aspect of all intellectual pro-

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cess. Now in the Herbartian theory there is no place for the synthetic activity of the Ego. We have the process conceived as throughout determined by the nature of the ideas themselves—and if we are to be in earnest with the doctrine that training and discipline form essential parts of the educative process, then we shall have to reject the Herbartian psychology as a basis upon which to found our educational principles, and realise that some other foundation is necessary. And here I may take up the contention made at the introduction of the series of lectures. The Herbartian claims to deal with concrete experience, with the actual modes by which knowledge develops, and asserts that the rational psychologist deals with the universal conditions present in every mind. But all that seems to be seriously meant by such a statement is that the Herbartian takes account of the fact that apperceptive processes take different forms according to the differing mental contents of the individual. The Herbartian lays stress upon the differences between the mental contents while the rational psychologist lays emphasis



on the identity throughout the process, and seeks to determine the various forms in which this identity manifests itself in the development of knowledge. And surely the Herbartian admits and claims that apperception is a universal condition—an unchangeable presupposition of the human mind. You cannot get along without some kind of bond, although you may reduce the bond to one single type, and in fact, as we shall see in the sequel, the activity of the self, nay the very self itself, is reduced to, and made identical with, the universal condition of psychological relationship in general.

→ In concluding this part of the subject, I must emphasise the fact that mere easy assimilation of the material, the making of school work interesting in this sense to the child, is erroneous. The fundamental educational aim should be to arouse the self-activity of the pupil, to call forth the active functioning of the Ego; and let me add here again, this cannot be done by the mere presentation of the right material. This alone is not sufficient. There must be present

an idea of purpose or end, and it is the subjective value of the idea or end which is the motive power in setting and keeping in active operation every attention process. The placing of feeling in a secondary and subordinate position is responsible for the neglect of this factor. The presence of the mere idea of end or purpose is not alone sufficient, it must also have this emotional accompaniment.

The doctrine of apperception naturally leads us next to consider the account of interest which is given in the Herbartian theory, and since this is the dominating category in the method of the school, and also occupies an important place in their ethical theory, it requires careful consideration. But, before entering on the discussion, it is well to note that no word in educational literature is used so ambiguously, and with so many varied meanings, as this. In the first place, interest may be applied to, and may mean the feeling-tone which is subsequent to or accompanies the apperceptive or attention process. This feeling may be either pleasant or painful. It is painful when

there is an apperceptive process set up, which we would, but cannot, banish from the mind. We are drawn, so to speak, towards the object against our will. Now, in the strict psychological sense, interest is simply the feeling-tone which accompanies the process of *active* attention. It is not a coefficient of the process *quâ* process, but of the subject self. But, secondly, interest may be identified with the process by which a presentate is easily assimilated into a previously existing system, and it is in this sense that the word is most frequently used by Herbartian writers, and it is this which is often implied in the current use of the term in educational circles. We are to make the acquisition of knowledge an easy, pleasant, and agreeable task to the child. Everything is to be so prepared that it may be easily assimilated, and the child is to be relieved as far as possible of the irksomeness of learning. It is quite a different thing to say that we ought to present our matter so that it can be assimilated with the old, and to assert that it is the duty of the teacher to make the process an easy and agreeable one. Again, interest may be used to include



both the attention-process and the feeling-tone which accompanies it. And since in the Herbartian theory the feeling-tone is a secondary and derived product of the apperceptive process, interest comes to be identified with apperception. We find interest used in still another and quite different sense by Herbartians. When they affirm that the aim of education, or rather that the only means by which we can realise the ethical end of education, is by the formation of a many-sided interest, what they mean is that we should endeavour to form as many and as varied apperceptive systems as possible in the mind of the child—to give him an ever-widening circle of ideas; for ideas, as we have already more than once been told, are of primary importance in the building up of the mind. Again, there is another usage of the term, as when we say that a man has various interests or is interested in a particular subject, and here we mean that on the presentation of anything connected with the subject active interest is likely to be aroused, *i.e.* an active attention-process of a pleasant kind is likely to ensue.

Now what is to be noted is that in these different usages each and all apply to particular psychological processes: interest is either identified wholly with the process of apperception, or refers merely to the feeling-tone accompanying the process, or is another name for the result obtained by the process, viz. the extending and widening of the circle of ideas. That is, we are to conceive of interest both as a means and as an end: as a method for securing attention, and as a result of our educational activity. And the contention of the Herbartian is, that in the fostering of "many-sided interests" we have the best guarantee for the future moral life of the pupil. "In a many-sided interest," one writer remarks, "the pupil should find a moral support and protection against the servitude that springs from the rule of desire and passion. It should arm him against the fitful chances of fortune. It should enable him to find a new calling when driven from the old. It should elevate him to a standpoint from which the goods and successes of earthly life appear as accidental, and above which the moral

character stands free and sublime.”<sup>1</sup> Now whether this result can be effected by the method of the Herbartian is the point in question—whether the one kind of interest is the right means to the attainment of the other; and this is a matter which will require further consideration.

But besides this psychological account of interest, there is the well-known classification of interests into those arising from knowledge and those arising from association with others. It is difficult to determine on what basis this classification is made. But a consideration in some detail of the various classes may aid us in the elucidation of the matter. In the interests arising from Knowledge we have the empirical interest, or the pleasure excited in the mind by new objects and new sources of sensation. This, of course, is simply one way in which in early life we may succeed in arousing involuntary apperceptive processes. The speculative interest and æsthetic interest are the two others mentioned under this head. The speculative interest is defined as the search into the causal explanation of things, and the æsthetic as the pleasure

<sup>1</sup> Kern; *cf.* De Garmo, “Herbart,” p. 60.

manifested in the perception of beauty. But the objection that may be urged here is: How are we to account for the presence of these in the Herbartian theory? The speculative interest implies a will or self directed to the attainment of an end for its own sake, and although "interest," in the sense of a system of ideas, may be a necessary condition for enlightened speculative interest, it is only a means and not the end itself. The desire to know is the condition for the creation of a many-sided interest, and the latter may be built up in the mind and yet not create the former, and my contention is that "interest," in the sense of the easy and pleasant assimilation of knowledge, is not the right method by which to acquire interest in the ethical sense. It is only when we have aroused the desire to know for its own sake, that we can have the speculative interest, and if we leave no difficulties, no problems for the child to solve, we shall end by destroying that interest. Only when we have aroused the active attention of the child have we present interest in this teleological sense.

The same criticism applies to the second

great division of interests—the sympathetic, the social, and the religious. They imply ends sought for their own sake. The wise following out of those ends implies a wide and comprehensive knowledge, but the desiring of the end is not the resultant of the knowledge. And just as we saw in the case of attention and apperception, that the teleological aspect involved in these processes is neglected in the Herbartian theory, so, in like manner, the Herbartian doctrine of interest is erroneous, because it neglects the teleological aspect. It is neglected in the psychological account of the mental life, which teaches us that interest is solely a matter of the pleasant and agreeable coming together of apperceptive systems.

Moreover, its ethical and teleological account of the various ends and interests will not fit in with its psychological explanation. For example, you must conceive the speculative interest as due solely to the working of an apperceptive process, set in motion mechanically by the appearance in consciousness of a presentate which does not easily assimilate or fuse with the operative system of ideas. Strictly



on Herbartian lines, which admit of only one kind of process, you must explain the speculative interest as a variety of *the* process, as a case of the one function, as a particular and peculiar kind of fusion and antagonism.

In our educational theory we must reject any doctrine of interest which makes it a mere function of the ideas and neglects it as a function of the active subject. Ideas are the means by which interest is evoked, and by means of which it works its ends. And we have interest in the psychological sense only when we are actively employed in the practical, imaginative, or theoretical construction or reconstruction of the material supplied by sense, or by the inner workings of the psychological mechanism ; and this again implies the idea of an end active and dominant throughout the process, and it is in the realisation of the end that the phenomenon of interest manifests itself. Interest is the mark and presence of self-activity in the mental life ; and the motive power which drives it on is the value of the end, its subjective worth to the individual. True, the process only works through

the medium of ideas, through the active operation of a system of ideas, and, until there is a system, interest in this constructive sense cannot be present. This can be easily verified in our own experience. The artist is interested in the realisation of the end of depicting upon the canvas the ideal which he conceives; the child in his working with a set of picture blocks is interested in the successful issue of piecing them together. The parts must fit in both cases, but this is only the means, a necessary means, the mechanism by which interest works, and not the interest itself. The teacher may furnish us with all the materials for the process of construction, but, unless we feel the value of realising the end, the process of active attention will never be aroused. And to emphasise this position more clearly, let me give you an example from another sphere. It is not because a man may have a great knowledge of philosophy and of philosophical theories that he has an interest in that subject. The knowledge may be there and not the interest. It is because certain problems, certain questions, demand an answer for his soul's satisfaction that



interest arises. Interest creates the desire for knowledge, and not knowledge interest.

It is then the feeling-tone which accompanies the process of *active* attention which is the characteristic mark of the presence of interest in the psychological sense. Whenever *active* attention is absent, interest is absent; and what we have to try and not confuse is the mechanism by which interest manifests itself, and the end to which it is directed.

Ethically, our classification of interests falls into two main classes—indirect interest and direct interest. In indirect interest we seek an end not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else. We may acquire knowledge, and thus create a many-sided interest in the Herbartian sense, because we wish to pass an examination, or to gain a prize, or to stand well in the estimation of our compeers, or to gain a living; and in all these cases the end desired may fall outside of the object desired. In these instances the creation of knowledge is not necessarily a means for the creation of interest in its strictly ethical signification. On the other

hand, we have direct interest when there is no object desired beyond the thing itself, or rather, to avoid misapprehension, when the object desired is primary and fundamental, and not secondary and derivative. Even the mechanic may desire to know primarily and fundamentally for the sake of knowing, and only secondarily for the sake of earning a living. The particular sphere of knowledge, the particular object may interest for its own sake—it is the one way in which the self seeks its realisation, its satisfaction. The interest is in the problem and its solution, not in the thing to which it is a means. It is the having interest in this sense that has throughout the ages been the driving force of the world. It is this that spurs on the reformer; it is this that cheers and supports the worker in every sphere of action who works for the sake of the work; and in each and every case this interest is not a function of the ideas or knowledge of the particular subject, but derives its working force from the subjective worth of the end desired. This subjective worth may be objectively wrong, as *e.g.* in the case of the fanatic;

but without its presence there will not be, and cannot be, interest in the true sense of seeking an end for its own sake.

In education, however, we must rely to a great extent upon the working of indirect interest. By indirect means we strive to arouse the active attention of the child, but the aim of all good teaching should be to make less and less use of these means. Indirect interest accomplishes its end and aim only when it passes into direct interest. We may begin the study of a subject, or engage in a particular pursuit, for the sake of some other end than the subject or pursuit itself, but we shall succeed in attaining our result of founding a permanent and stable interest only when we have been successful in establishing some end, theoretical or practical, which is followed out for its own sake. Knowledge, or many-sided interest, in the Herbartian sense, is a means, a necessary means, for the wise following out of these ends whatever they may be, high or low, base or ignoble, but the real active agent in the furtherance and pursuit of the end is the more or less stable value or worth

which the end has, or seems to have, for the self-realisation of the life of the particular individual.

On the contrary, interest in the Herbartian sense is actually present or aroused when a process of assimilation or apperception is in active operation, and according to this theory two things are necessary for the successful evoking of the process : (1) a system of ideas to which the new idea can be incorporated ; and (2) the presentation of the new in such a manner that this incorporation may be easily and readily effected. Given these two conditions, the process is conceived as taking place without the activity of the Ego or self. In the theory laid down in these lectures, it is maintained that, while these two conditions are necessary, interest is present only when we have active attention, and is the mark or index of the activity of the self, *i.e.* we have interest present only when we have a process of active reconstruction, theoretical, imaginative, or practical, of the data supplied by means of the psycho-physical organism. In order that this may be evoked, there must be present the idea of an end or purpose, and

this end or purpose is active and operative because of its emotional value, temporary or permanent, to the individual self. In other words, interest is not the mere mechanical result of the easy coming together of a presentate and an apperceptive system. It is the feeling-tone which accompanies the process of active attention ; it is the index or mark which accompanies the active realisation of an end or idea in, by, and for the satisfaction of the self. And the chief thing to note is, that unless the end appeals by its emotional worth to the self, the process of active attention and interest will not be evoked.

Again, many-sided interest in the Herbartian theory means the formation of many and varied apperceptive systems, and the contention is that this is the only or chief condition for the formation of permanent or stable interests. On the contrary, we maintain that while knowledge is a means to the wise following out of any end, the permanency and stability of interest depend upon the stable worth or value which the end or ends have for the realisation of the particular



life. Knowledge is a function of the end, the end is not a function of the knowledge.

Further, "interests" imply a subject or self as their bearer ; they exist only as the interests of a self and not as a mere collection of systems of ideas. What account does Herbart give of the Self, of the permanent subject to which each and every "interest" must belong ; or, in Herbartian terms, what is the nature of the presentation-mass which is apperceptive, or at least capable of being so to every presentation ? The self or Ego has three characteristic marks : (1) It is the centre to which all experience is referred ; (2) It is somehow permanent and one throughout the whole process ; (3) It is aware of itself and of all else. Now, the problem for Herbart is to determine the nature of the apperceptive system which has these three characteristic marks. In early life the body-complex is the more or less permanent centre to which the various experiences are referred ; but as we progress in mental development, other systems of ideas, and in particular those connected with our inner world of emotions and feel-



ings, displace the body from its position of honour ; but these are not able to satisfy the required condition of being the apperipient in all apperception. The only thing which is permanent and identical throughout the whole Herbartian process of mental development is the fact of associative or apperceptive function. Individual presentations, individual systems, may change and alter their character, but the one thing constant throughout the process is the assimilative function — “the interconnection of presentations which is implied in their union in one consciousness ;” and in so far as the self becomes aware of this ever-constant function, it may be said to be aware of itself, and the unity of consciousness becomes an object of consciousness. Such a view need scarcely be criticised. If we start with elementary ideas and only one kind of process, there can, of course, be no other result. But we may point out that the self as so conceived is but a mere general and abstract name for assimilative or apperceptive function in general, and that an apperceptive system, in which it is possible for every constituent element to change

and which yet remains the *same* system on account of this bare identity of function, is a myth and a fiction. Indeed, if we are to take such a conception seriously, then there can be no difference between particular selves, for we, one and all, are mere machines; poor even then, for we can only perform the one function, the ever and never-ceasing connecting of presentate with presentate. And there can be no other result so long as we endeavour to frame our explanation of the mental life upon the analogy of physical mechanics, and to construe "the perfectly unique sphere of mental life after a pattern foreign to it."

It is obvious that in education such a theory leads logically to a conceiving of the process of education as a mere mechanical building up of knowledge; to the idea that knowledge is an end in itself, and not a means for the realisation of the ends of life; to the neglect of the fact that the unity of the mental life is a unity of purpose—a teleological and not a mere mechanical unity, and that we can succeed only in so far as we bind together the various aims and purposes of

life to the realisation of the one comprehensive ethical aim. The unity of the self is not an abstract and mechanical unity, but a concrete and teleological unity.

## LECTURE III

### THE HERBARTIAN ETHIC

HAVING pointed out the main principles of the Herbartian psychology, and having in a more or less inadequate way indicated their bearings on educational theory and educational practice, let us now consider the more important elements of the Herbartian Ethic. It may be asked why the discussion of the end of education, as set forth by Herbart, should follow and not precede the discussion of his psychology. And the answer is that his ethical theory is a subordinate part of the wider psychological theory, and that without a knowledge of the latter it is impossible to understand the former. But before doing so, let me mention that Herbart, like most modern educationalists, strongly insists upon the fact that the end of education is ethical. I am afraid that this is often maintained in theory but for-

gotten in practice. But no one has urged more keenly or more vigorously than Herbart that "the one and the whole work of education" is morality; and he also, as it seems to me rightly, extends the conception to include more than mere goodness. But for us, meanwhile, the chief thing of importance is to try to understand clearly what is implied in the use of the term. Does the explanation of the moral life given by the Herbartian take into account the whole of the facts, or does it tend to emphasise one particular aspect to the neglect of others? And what I shall endeavour to show in the present lecture is that the Herbartian doctrine of morality is simply the Socratic doctrine, that virtue is knowledge, dressed up in a new garb and explained in a less satisfactory manner. Looked at from another aspect, the theory of virtue reduces itself to a species of æsthetic intuitionism, which, like the intuitionism of our earlier Scottish philosophy, is of a purely formal nature, and is unable to give us definite guidance except in a purely abstract manner. Like every species of intuitionism, it has the defect that its principles must be taken

to be of equal value under all possible circumstances ; for we cannot, on such a theory, have a governing principle which determines the relative value of each without giving up the theory. Again we shall see that it is an attempt to found ethics on a psychological basis, and that basis a deterministic and fatalistic one. This point is to be particularly insisted on, because Herbart himself and many of his followers would have us believe that in this theory we escape, on the one hand, that theory of the moral life which regards any change as possible, and, on the other hand, that which regards as impossible all changes not arising out of pre-existing mental contents: *i.e.* the theory is supposed to mediate between a mere indeterministic account of the moral life and a deterministic. Finally, we shall see that virtue in the Herbartian theory may be anything at all ; and, in the words of a recent writer, the one, only, and great moral rule is, " Know what you want, and see that you get it." Or as Herbart himself says, in terms reminiscent of our new English Hegelian school,<sup>1</sup> " Each individual in his own way

<sup>1</sup> *Cf. eg.* Taylor's " Problem of Conduct."



seeks consistency. The ambitious man and the egoist complete themselves in victory over the *better* traits of individuality. The hero of vice and the hero of virtue alike complete themselves in victory over self.”<sup>1</sup> In the Herbartian theory the sole test of “betterness” is the width and inner consistency of the active and dominant apperceptive system. The only sin is that of weakness, and weakness is stupidity.

The Herbartian ethic is, on its negative side, opposed to the Kantian doctrine of a transcendental will, or a will which is above and independent of every particular impulse and desire. The psychology and ethic of Herbart is the swing back from the transcendental psychology and transcendental ethic of Kant. The latter had insisted on the activity of the Ego and its synthetic unities, the categories, in the construction or reconstruction of experience, and had declared that the only moral act was that which was freed from every trace of the nature of the empirical self and motivated only by the pure ego. Herbart, on the other hand, finds not only

<sup>1</sup> “Science of Education” (trans. by Felkin), p. 118.

the materials of knowledge, but the principle of unity in the nature of the particular ideas. The ideas being given, and on the hypothesis of these ideas being the centres of forces, everything can be explained without reference to the Ego or its synthetic activity. In a similar manner, ethical conduct can be explained from a survey of the empirical facts, and from noting certain relations that come to pass between the apperceiving mass, which for the time is identified with the self, and other apperceived masses. Now we may admit that the Kantian way of looking at the moral life, and, in particular, the doctrine of a transcendental will which sits aloft and descends upon and identifies itself with this or that particular motive, for no obvious reason, is erroneous, and further, that such a conception is of no use in the work of education. For as Herbart strongly urges, if such a will can interfere, without our knowledge and without our interposition, in the work of building up the mind, then the task of the educator ceases to have that vigour which it has when he becomes aware that his work counts for much in the development of the pupil's mind.

And although the tendency of the Herbartian theory is to exaggerate the importance of the teacher in the work of education, yet this is an error which leans to virtue's side.

In the second place, the ethic of Herbart is opposed to that of Kant in another way. Kant had emphasised and made supreme the ascetic or negative aspect of the moral life. For Kant freedom means, in one aspect at least, freedom from the mere life of the senses, and to be fully free in this sense would be not *to be* at all. In education this leads us to think that the giving of mere negative commands is the principal part in the work of Moral Education. Herbart, on the other hand, insists on the positive aspect of virtue; it is not a mere not-doing but a doing; and his chief insistence is that it is a knowledge of the particular acts of right and wrong which is of importance in education, and that knowledge of what is right and wrong is of primary importance.

All action arises from and springs out of the circle of ideas, or as "our own Locke" puts it in his quainter and truer

way, "The man which is the agent determines himself to this or that voluntary action upon some precedent knowledge, or appearance of knowledge, in the understanding. The understanding, with such light as it has, well or ill-informed, constantly leads." And this truth, for it is a truth, that all action springs from the circle of ideas, is fundamental in the Herbartian theory ; but the fallacy, as we shall see, is in supposing that since action is idea-motor action, this is all and of supreme importance.

Coming to the details of the ethical system, we must first note that, for Herbart, ethics is a subordinate branch of the wider science of æsthetics. In such a science we have an account given of the directly perceived harmonies that exist in nature and in art. Now ethical laws are perceptions of the harmonies existing between volitional relations ; and Herbart enumerates five such æsthetic intuitions or direct perceptions of harmonious will-relations.

The first of these moral ideas is that of inner freedom, and this arises from the satisfaction or pleasure felt in the

harmony between a projected action and our judgment upon it. That is, from the psychological standpoint we must conceive of a harmony between the apperception mass with which our moral selves are identified and the idea of the projected action as it appears to the consciousness of the individual. In performing such an action we feel that we are acting conscientiously, and that the act is our own. As an account of psychological freedom this is correct, and it is important in education that we should aim at making our pupils act always in accordance with their ideas of what is right. If they err, then it is the duty of the educator to correct and widen the child's ideas of right and wrong, and so lead him to see the erroneousness of his previous standpoint. But it is well to note that the guidance furnished by this rule is purely formal, and may belong equally to what we should call an immoral as to a moral act. This psychological or subjective freedom is the old intuitionist doctrine, that we should always act in accordance with the dictates of our conscience. And from such

a purely formal and subjective self-consciousness bitter waters are likely to flow as well as sweet. The subjective will, claiming the right to act in accordance with its insight into what is right, may open the door to hypocrisy, to caprice, to the performance of evil, and may claim even that evil is its good. And more generally, in the abstract way in which the principle is arrived at in the Herbartian theory, it is difficult to distinguish between purely moral action and any class of action in which the means are perfectly adjusted for the realisation of an end, whatever the nature of the end may be.

But in the second moral idea, Herbart endeavours to get beyond this bare formality, and to emphasise that insight is also necessary for right moral activity ; but here again we shall see that the insight is of a purely subjective character, and that this is inevitable so long as we attempt to found our ethical convictions upon a purely psychological or subjective basis. It is somewhat difficult to understand this second moral idea of Herbart's, owing to the mathematical way in which he states



it. The idea is that of "perfection" or "greatness" or "strength of character." Of any two actions, that which is greater in extent, *i.e.* in the multiplicity of the results attained as the effect of the volition, in the concentration or combination of these results to one total end, and in the energy or intension with which the volition is carried out, over another less in magnitude as regards these three dimensions, yields the greater æsthetic satisfaction, and is on that account of greater moral worth. In simpler language, the enlightened man who carefully calculates all the possible results of his projected volition and then carries it out with all the energy at his disposal, is the morally better man. It is the contention of Herbert here, as throughout his moral theory, that knowledge is of primary importance in the moral life, and that the moral man is the man whose action springs from an apperceptive system wide in extent, internally coherent in its organisation, and which on that account is dominant in the direction of his conduct. Napoleon and Bacon are sometimes put forward as examples in the concrete of persons who

possessed this characteristic of "greatness" or "strength of character." But the conception may equally be applied to the life and conduct of the successful swindler and cracksman. The rule is purely formal. Because your morality cannot be an enlightened morality without a full and complete knowledge of the means and of the probable consequences likely to ensue, or, more generally, because you cannot follow any end intelligently without a full knowledge of the means necessary for its realisation, therefore virtue is knowledge; and if not knowledge, then greatness, and greatness is simply knowledge considered in its extent and intent or internal coherency.

But if it is true, as Herbart so strongly insists upon, that the stupid man cannot be virtuous in the sense that his conduct can never be enlightened, it is no less true that mere enlightenment is not in itself virtue. And experience daily proves that mere enlightenment or mere culture is not virtue nor the effective condition of virtue. Virtue is not virtue irrespective of the nature of the ends which the will or self seeks to realise ;

and while knowledge is a means to the enlightened pursuit of these ends, it is only a means and not the end itself. And to the insistence on the supremacy of knowledge, and on the subordinate part which feeling and emotion play in the direction of our conduct, is to be traced the fundamental fallacy of the Herbartian school.

Against the criticism of Herbart, it has been more than once advanced that we must take into account the other moral ideas, and that to lay the emphasis on the two already named ideas is to give a biassed and one-sided account of the theory; for Herbart also laid down, that we should aim at Benevolence, at Justice, at Equity. But these ideas, no less than the two which are placed in the forefront, are formal. We are still in the region of subjective morality, still at the mercy of the individual conscience; for to take Benevolence as an example, it is defined as the perception of the harmony between my projected volition and the imagined or supposed will of another. But the real question—the question of objective Benevolence—is as to the real will of another,

and not to what I suppose or imagine will be the effect of the reciprocity between my will and the real will of another. If I imagine that such and such an act will be pleasing to another, then this is said to guarantee its rightness. If we begin in this subjective way, then there can be no passage to a purely objective standard of morality. Inner harmony, inner satisfaction, become the only test of right conduct. The other two ideas are of a similar nature; and at this time of day there is no need to slay the already slain, and to argue against an æsthetic intuitionism which results in making ethical conduct a matter of purely subjective feeling, guaranteed only by the harmony between an apperceptive system, which the individual identifies with his moral self, and a projected volition. Like Mill's conscience, which he declared to be the ultimate sanction of conduct, and which also at the same time varies with the varying training and environment of the individual, so in like manner the apperceptive system, which functions in each of us, as our moral conscience and our moral self, may be, on the Herbartian

theory, anything we please. The soul is nothing ; we count for nothing in the process of development, but are wholly determined by the nature of our environment and by our education. The child is mere potter's clay in the hands of the teacher. His conscience, his moral ideal, all that he shall ever become or hope to become lies in our hands; for when he passes from under our charge, his intellectual cast, his moral bent, has already received that form and shape which determines all the succeeding course of his life. We may be free at our birth, but, from the moment we open our eyes and become aware of the world in which we live, our whole after-life is inevitably determined, and thereafter we are at the mercy of our environment, and become the mere sport of circumstances.

“ Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows  
He sees it in his joy :  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended ;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.”

And in like manner in the Herbartian theory we must conceive of our lives as being gradually hedged in and limited by the circle of ideas, with the difference that the light has been but an illusion throughout. The more our action springs from the circle of thought the more determined we are; and since the whole process is one in which we have no part, we can hardly be held responsible, and if blame there be, it must rest upon our educators, who have not framed and selected the appropriate environment, but have left us at the mercy of influences of an evil nature.

The tendency to make knowledge of primary importance in the work of education, to look upon mere instruction, the ever widening of the circle of ideas as the effective agent in the guidance and determination of conduct, is manifested in the development of the educational theory. The ethical ideas which have to do with our relations to others become less and less important, and what is now placed in the forefront is the second idea. "In the work of education," writes



Herbart, "the foremost of all other ideas, not as of greater importance, but because it is continually applicable, is the idea of perfection." And the reason for placing it in such a prominent position is obvious, for "perfection" is simply another name for many-sided interest, for a wide circle of ideas. Morality is to be measured by the width and depth and height of our knowledge about morality. In other words, the Herbartian theory of virtue is simply the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge stated in terms of a mechanical psychology. It is assumed that the only thing necessary for moral action is to know what is moral, and since feeling is a subordinate result of knowledge, our emotional life is wholly guided, directed, and dependent on our knowledge, and the relations between its different parts.

We may readily admit that knowledge, or insight into what is right, is an essential element in or condition of virtue, and at the same time deny that it is the only thing to be taken account of in the training up of the pupil. We must again insist that it is the teleological aspect of conduct

that is important in education, and for this aspect there is no place in the Herbartian theory. Education is the training up of the child to act in accordance with an ideal of right, and this ideal, whatever it may be, high or low, must make its appeal to the emotional side of his nature, otherwise it will remain ineffective. Character-making is not will-building in the sense of building up certain apperception masses which act of themselves (and this is what will-building means in the theory of Herbart). It is the training up of the child to act always in accordance with his ideal of what is right. Knowledge or insight is necessary, here as elsewhere, for well-acting, but it is the means and not the end. And just as we become proficient in the arts not by knowing about the particular subject but by practice, so likewise virtue is the result of activity guided, directed, and controlled by the ideal of an end or purpose.

A recent advocate of Herbartianism, with more zeal than philosophical knowledge, declares that "those persons who hold with the Greeks that self-development, culture, vigour of character are essential

elements in virtue will warmly welcome Herbartianism ;”<sup>1</sup> and those, on the other hand, who take an ascetic view of life will as warmly reject it. But a conception of life and mental development such as that of Herbart’s is altogether foreign to the Greek way of thinking. How can we speak of self-development if there is no self throughout the process, if the self, as we have seen, has been reduced to a mere abstraction, to a mere name for the repetition of an identical function. Culture, no doubt, is an element in the Greek conception of virtue, but it is a culture won by the energy and direction of the individual self. It is not something poured into us, but won by the sweat of our brow, by the labour of our own hands. And between the two extremes of a purely determined life and a purely undetermined, there is the theory which maintains that our life is self-determined, and that it is this self-determined life which should be the end and aim of our educational efforts.

Our aim in education is to train up our pupils in such a way that from the stage

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “The Student’s Herbart,” Introduction.

of mere obedience to external authority they shall pass to the stage of self-determination; guiding their conduct not merely in the practical, but also in the theoretical affairs of life, by a self-imposed ideal; and to the attainment of this end we must throughout the whole process evoke the self-activity of the child. No mere appeal to the head, no mere stuffing of the child with knowledge, with ideas of what is right or wrong, will suffice to produce the result. He must be habituated to act in accordance with an ideal of what is right. The ideal may be, nay, must be at first, an externally imposed ideal; but our ethical result is attained in education only in so far as the ideal gradually loses its character of mere externality, and becomes an internal and self-imposed ideal. And we children of a larger growth have also need to realise that all ethical and political obligation is essentially of the same nature. All government which is ethical is self-government—government of our lower selves by our higher.

Not only does the Herbartian theory tend to identify virtue with culture, but in its

A denial of a self that is active throughout the process of knowing and doing, it explains away personality and moral responsibility, and with these, virtue itself is explained away. For if we are nothing but ever-changing apperceptive systems which mutually act, react, and cause by their interaction internal changes in us which, according to their nature and direction, may manifest themselves in outward action, and if the identity throughout the whole process is nothing but the bare and empty identity of apperceptive or associative function, then even if our lives become moral and prudential, or immoral and inconsistent, we cannot be held responsible. As we can hardly attribute responsibility to mere apperceptive systems, personality becomes a myth and a fiction. The psychological agents in the drama of human life are nothing but the ideas themselves, and the soul, the will, the character are nothing but general names for the ideas, or for the movements amongst these ideas. And with Hume we must think of the soul as "a kind of theatre where several perceptions successively make their appearance, pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an

infinite variety of postures and situations." If in our educational work we keep strictly to the tenets of the Herbartian theory, we shall cease blaming the child for this or that fault (as we are so prone to do through want of that insight furnished by this philosophy alone), and shall look upon him rather as a piece of apparatus, an imperfect organisation of apperceptive systems, which we must endeavour to patch up. This conception of moral evil as a form of disease or an imperfection for which the individual is in no way responsible, is a familiar one in our home-bred utilitarian philosophy, but it also belongs to the Herbartian conception of the human mind and its method of development. An eclectic Herbartian educationalist—the breed, I may parenthetically remark, which flourishes most abundantly in our own country—has lately told us that the criminal, the abnormal, the defective, and the insane are all on the same footing as regards education as the child.<sup>1</sup> And since we are all more or less defective, he might have added that we are all in the same

<sup>1</sup> Findlay, "Principles of Class Teaching," p. 4.



condition, and that the difference between each and all of us is simply a difference in the extent and degree of complexity of our systems of ideas. Mechanical consistency is the only test of virtue or of vice. The vicious man is a man with loosely arranged and narrow apperception masses. You may condemn him on the same grounds as you would condemn a badly constructed machine, but on no other. He may be either a useless bolt in the social machine, or a fly-wheel which occasionally gets out of order and hinders its effective working, but that is all; you must attach your blame to the right centre of responsibility, and that must be to the power which manifests itself in the universe. The work of the educator on such a theory consists in the strengthening or rectifying of the operative and active apperception masses, and in nothing else. You may add here, endeavour to substitute there, but this is your whole function, and there is nothing else that you can do. Such a conception of course leads, not only in the smaller society of the school but also in

the larger society of the State, to the theory that punishment is justifiable only when its sole end is that of the reformation of the ill-doer. No account is taken of the fact that the child and the criminal can deliberately and with full intent set up their private wills against the common or moral will of the community, that their action, if allowed to go on unchecked and unpunished, would tend to the dissolution of society, and that punishment in its essence is simply evil inflicted for evil done.

Again, Herbartianism fails to explain, or explains away, individuality; for though there is, in some Herbartian circles, much talk about individuality, and of the duty of the teacher carefully to take into account this factor in his work, there is logically no place for it in the system. According to this theory, we all are initially equal at birth, and the differences among us are not nine-tenths, as Locke said, but wholly due to our education and environment; for the educational influences, in strict Herbartian terms, are simply specially arranged and selected environments, and the success of our educational efforts depends wholly

on the care with which we environ the child from infancy onwards.

But however we may neglect individuality in our working out of some empirical and abstract conception of the mental life, it cannot be neglected in our educational reference, nor when we consider man's life as a whole. Let us take first the wider question, in which there are two things to be considered. In the first place, there is no such thing as a mere environment apart from the nature of the life which is environed. Each individual thing has a nature specifically its own, and it is this nature, in reciprocity with external nature, which determines what is or what is not its particular environment. There is no such thing, either in the animal world or in the life of man, as this bare power of reacting upon the presentation of an object in response to an outward excitation, which Herbart postulates at the outset of his theory. Given two species, each placed under the same physical and natural conditions, then the environment of each will differ according to the differing nature of each; there will be no competition, no struggle for

existence, except in so far as their natures and wants are identical in kind. In the same way, man is never the mere result of his environment in the sense that his nature and character are wholly determined by the external influences brought to bear upon him. He reacts according to his *specific* nature, according to the nature of that which distinguishes him from all else in nature. And since man is Reason, is a being not determined from without, but self-determining, who acts, as Kant has pointed out, not in accordance with law but in accordance with the idea or conception of law, he can take and mould these conditions to his own ends and purposes. Environment then is in every case the resultant of a mutual determination, of a reciprocity between the active nature of the agent and that of external influences; and it is through this power of going out to, of understanding these external conditions, and of subduing them to his own ends that man is able to constitute himself a person. In the second place, not only does man thus differ essentially from all else, but each of us is empirically different from the

other, and our reactions originally differ in degree, *i.e.* while there is an identity in the nature of the reactions set up in each case, the difference is due to differences in the natures of the particular individuals. We are all initially equal in one respect; we are all initially different in another. But the initial equality of the Herbartians is a bare, barren, and empty conception, a mere abstract power of reacting; it is a mere fiction, and only postulated for the sake of a theory. One can only gaze in astonishment when our Herbartian educationalists gravely discuss the effects of such a fiction, and fondly declare that, by postulating individual differences in this bare power of reacting,<sup>1</sup> we save individuality and reconcile it with the doctrine of many-sided interest—with the doctrine that our character depends wholly on the knowledge we acquire, on the number and strength of the apperceptive systems which are gradually formed in us. And we may ask them, how a theory which has been so long ago rejected as of no use in biological explanation can be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Felkin, Introduction to the "Science of Education," p. 34.

of so much importance in the explanation of the mental life? On this theory man's whole character and the differences which ultimately arise amongst men can be fully explained by differences of mere energy in relation to external circumstances. But mere energy, whether in physics or psychology, is an empty nothing, and so we are left with but the one factor; and, since all action is the resultant of mutual interaction, this in itself is insufficient to account for differences in individuality. And besides these differences, due to the initial differences with which we *essentially* react upon the presence of external conditions, there are psychological differences due to physiological differences in the bodily and nervous organisation of each of us, so that, as a consequence, the external conditions are never the same in any two cases.

The Herbartian, I repeat, reduces individuality to mere differences in this bare power of reacting; and since this is a fiction, then the differences must be of a like nature, or if not, then the differences must be explained as due solely to physiological causes, so that the final differences



between two children, placed under the same external conditions, must be due to differences in their physiological structure. Now this would be sufficient to explain the diversities of character which ultimately manifest themselves, if our reactions were purely physiological reactions; and this leads logically (as actually has happened in the development of the Herbartian psychology), to the conception of the mental life as a mere epiphenomenon of the physiological reactions set up in the brain. If we reject this view, we must also reject the view that differences in mental reaction are solely due to physiological differences, and hold, on the contrary, that in every reaction there is a psychological as well as a physiological aspect, and that the latter, taken apart and by itself, is an abstraction.

But the angry and impatient Herbartian will retort:—If this theory of the moral life is so erroneous, so absurd, so full of contradictions, such a massing together of fallacies; if, as you say, it explains away personality and responsibility, and leaves us with not a shred of individuality except that which is due to our conditions

in life ; if, further, it makes virtue anything we please, so that a Borgia no less than a Howard must be considered virtuous, how can you account for its widespread adoption, for the enthusiasm which it arouses in certain educational circles, for the prevalence of so much Herbartian heat ? In reply, I can only repeat what Professor James has said in a similar reference :<sup>1</sup> "Nothing is so easy to understand as this mechanical conception of the mental life. Man's conduct appears as the mere resultant of all his various impulses and inhibitions. One object by its presence makes us act ; another checks our action. Feelings aroused and ideas suggested by the objects sway us one way or another ; emotions complicate the game by their mutually inhibitive effects, the higher abolishing the lower, or perhaps being itself swept away. . . . Like all conceptions, when they become clear and lively enough, this conception has a strong tendency to impose itself upon belief." It is the simplicity of the theory, the apparent clearness and definiteness with which it seems to

<sup>1</sup> "Talks to Teachers," p. 177 *et seq.*

4 explain the mental life, that is the reason of its popularity. It is so easy to understand, it imbues the teacher with the idea that his power in the work of education is almost absolute, and in this way it is pleasing to his self-conceit.

But it is erroneous if taken for other than what it is—an abstract way of looking at the mental life, a way which may be adopted for certain methodological purposes, but which is neither a full nor true account of that life and its method of development. It is doubly erroneous when made the basis of a theory of educational practice.

It is erroneous because, in theories of this nature, the moral life is looked at from the outside, from the point of view of the mere spectator, and not from the inside as it appears to the individual apperipient. From his point of view it never appears as this mere mechanical process, as an ever-flowing stream of which he is a mere passive spectator: he knows and feels himself to be a real agent, ever determining, ever interfering with the direction of the stream of consciousness, ever using it for the realisa-

tion of his ends. It is the nature of the ends, accordingly, which the child seeks to realise, and not the means by which they are realised, which it is the primary business of the teacher to know and to direct. It is also erroneous in so far as an attempt is made to found the principles of education upon an abstract account of the mental life. We take the results of an abstract and empirical psychology, heedless of the fact that the assumptions made in the theoretical working out of the science affect the nature and value of the results attained, and straightway we make them the basis of an educational theory, and apply the principles so obtained to educational practice. With an easy jauntiness we sometimes take for granted that the metaphysical assumptions underlying our psychological theory may be safely neglected without affecting in any way the practical guidance which the science affords. According to some educational writers of the Herbartian school, metaphysical assumptions as to the nature of the soul, and as to the part which it plays in the building up of our concrete experience, have no effect upon the results at-

tained. For all practical purposes, the soul may be safely neglected; the assumption of such an entity is of no value for an empirical science of the mind. Give us, say these writers, the presentations and certain laws or supposed laws of reaction among these so-called entities, and the concrete mind can be fully explained, and its mode of development clearly set forth; and having thus reduced the mind to atomistic elements with mechanical relationships, they work out certain theoretical results on this basis. Forthwith they rear on this abstract foundation an all-embracing methodology of education. They forget the fact that assumptions made as to the nature of the soul and the character of its contents affect the nature of the results obtained, and limit the practical guidance which the science furnishes to the educationalist. Not only is the guidance afforded by the science limited by the abstractness of its view and the presuppositions involved in its method, but the very elements omitted in the theoretical working out of the science may be of supreme importance from the practical point of view. If we simplify or alter the facts, so

that instead of dealing with the concrete contents of mind we are engaged with *abstracta*, with *factitious* elements, then we shall have to take this into account before converting our theoretical results into the practical principles of education. The elements omitted in our scientific inquiry may be of vital importance from the practical point of view, and the re-insertion of the omitted elements may alter the entire nature of the guidance afforded by the theoretical science.



## LECTURE IV

### EDUCATIONAL APPLICATION OF HERBARTIANISM

IN considering the Herbartian theory in its educational aspect, in so far as it yields us an insight into the nature of mental development, and consequently as a guide to the laying down of an educational method, the first and the most important thing to note is that it reduces all mental process to one particular kind, viz. to a process of assimilation or apperception, and explains this process in a purely mechanical manner. Now, there is no doubt that the Herbartian literature has thrown a flood of light upon the various ways in which this process is actually realised in our concrete experience. It has done much good in affirming that in all developed perception there is a process of apperception, and that by means of this the new presentate acquires meaning and significance. Also in the warning that

it furnishes to teachers that the interpretations, which children and adults give when a new object is presented, depend upon their previously existing store of ideas, and that we must keep this constantly in mind, it has been of great service. Further, in its insistence that knowledge is not a mere collection of facts lying loosely side by side, or connected only by their casual, temporal, and spatial relations, but a system, and that one aim of teaching is to build up in our pupils' minds systems of ideas internally coherent and connected, and as comprehensive as possible, it is a valuable contribution to educational method. One of the lessons which the Herbartian theory enforces has not yet been learned by many educators, namely, that the accuracy and power of observation which we wish to foster in our pupils can only be realised in so far as we have created in their minds systems of ideas. There is no such thing as the training of the senses : there is such a thing as training to accurate perception and accurate conception, but our concepts must be bound together by an identity of content if we are really to attain our aim of making our pupils

accurate observers along one or more different lines. This truth needs to be emphasised at the present day when there is so much teaching of nature-knowledge and of elementary science of a purely desultory kind. For example, the trained botanist is an accurate observer of plant life because he brings to bear upon the interpretation of a new specimen a well-arranged, internally coherent, and comprehensive system of ideas, and not because he brings a keener or more acute organ of sight to the examination of the specimen. True, accuracy in discrimination, gained in one sphere, may help in other spheres of knowledge, in so far as the identifying processes are similar in kind, but they will not aid the interpretation of further facts, unless there be also present an interpreting system.

But while giving due credit to the good in the Herbartian doctrine of Method, it is well to note its defects. It tends, in the first place, to make the process of apperception a kind of fetish, and to forget that it is only one of the innumerable results of the psychological process of association, and means nothing more than the act of taking a thing into the mind—

of apprehending it ; and, since all apprehension is through identity, it is, as I have already said, an aspect from which we can view every mental act. Now, some of the Herbartians seem to repeat in another form the doctrine in opposition to which the theory was founded. We have the apperceptive processes divided and subdivided into various forms, such as subsumptive apperception, assimilative apperception, and so on, until there is a danger of again committing the fallacy of thinking that there are different activities of the mind employed in each kind of association. All such classifications, however great a parade they may make of scientific exactitude, are merely artificial. As Professor James has pointed out, "there are as many types of apperception as there are possible ways in which an incoming experience may be reacted on by an individual mind."<sup>1</sup> The description of particular and strange cases of the apperceptive process, such as some writers are so fond of relating, may be interesting and furnish good descriptive material, but it does not aid us much in the further understanding of the subject. In fact, the only

<sup>1</sup> James, "Talks to Teachers," p. 162.

useful distinction is between active and passive apperception, and in this classification the basis of the distinction is, whether the new presentate or the apperceiving system is the greater force in the uniting process. I have already criticised this, and pointed out that in active apperception we have the gradual realisation of an explicit end or purpose, and the presence of an Ego active throughout the whole process.

Again, in the Herbartian theory we must conceive of the processes of imagination and conception as being effected in a purely mechanical manner, and of our images and concepts as being gradually formed through the fusing together of like elements and the dropping out of unlike. Such a method of explaining mental development is not peculiar to Herbartian psychology, but runs through most of our empirical psychologies, and is especially to be noted in Ward's doctrine of continua.<sup>1</sup> We have in Ward's theory, first, a presentation continuum, then an imagination continuum formed by the coagulation of like to like and the disappearance of dissimilar elements, and at

<sup>1</sup> Ward on *Psychology*, "Encyclopædia Britannica."

a further stage we have a further refinement of this process in the production of an ideational or conceptual continuum. Not only does it seem to me that such a method of looking at the mental life is of little scientific value, but it is of comparatively little importance for the practical educationalist. He seeks to guide and control the various processes of perception, imagination, and conception, and desires to know how they actually do take place, how the processes actually go on from the point of view of the individual experient, and not how they appear when we abstract from the synthetic activity of the ego, and view them from the outside as a mere spectator and in their completed results. Active perception, active imagination, active conception are all teleological processes, and it is only from this standpoint that they become thoroughly intelligible. Our mental life is not built up either by the stringing together of atomistic elements or by the gradual differentiation of a presentation continuum into discrete and distinct objects. It is not more enlightening to conceive of mental growth as



a gradual segregation and integration of like elements than it is to conceive of originally discrete elements fusing together through their identity of nature. "And just as a conscious series must be more than a series, so a conscious *continuum* must be more than a *continuum*. Consciousness is a unity, not a continuum." <sup>1</sup>

All mental process has a teleological aspect; it is throughout a self-determining as well as an externally determined process, and either aspect looked at by itself is an abstraction. In educational theory, if we are to be true to the facts, we must ever keep in mind this double aspect of all mental process. In active interpretation, in active construction, in the adoption of means for the attainment of some practical end, there is present, throughout, the idea of an end which determines the whole process, choosing here, rejecting there, the material supplied by the working of the psycho-physical organism; and it is this aspect of the mental life which is of importance to the educationalist. Nor is activity a mere activity, a mere power

<sup>1</sup> "Hegel," by Professor Mackintosh, p. 164.

or energy of voluntary attention, as Professor James<sup>1</sup> would have us believe. Either this energy or power of attention is a function of the ideas and their inter-connections, and we have again restated in other terms the contention of the Herbartian school, or it is a variable of the activity of the subject or self, a mere bare activity or energy, and such a conception is a mere fiction. If this is all that can be given us in order to save us from a deterministic and fatalistic conception of the mental life, then the gift is too small to effect the purpose. This, however, is too large a question, and for its full discussion would require a separate lecture; but I may say that what seems to me the fundamental fallacy of a good deal of our present-day psychological investigation is to be traced to the method of looking at the mental life from one aspect—from the outside—and forgetting the other. Even when the self-determining aspect is taken account of, it is usually brought in towards the end of the investigation as an adjunct, *e.g.* by James,<sup>2</sup> which makes little or no difference

<sup>1</sup> "Talks to Teachers," p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. xv.

in the results already obtained in the mechanical working out of the various processes. But if Reason as process and end is ever active in the elaboration of the materials supplied by the psychophysical organism, then the final results cannot be effected in the manner in which our empirical psychologists would have us believe. Reason is operative and active throughout the whole process: it may either, in the theoretical or practical sphere, misconceive the nature of the ends or take the wrong means to attain the ends even when the latter are rightly conceived; but, whether the result be truth or error, right or wrong conduct, there is this activity of Reason involved in all active mental process. The only difference between Logic and Psychology is, that in the former science we make explicit and conscious the conditions of right and wrong thinking. There is not one kind of thought with which psychology deals, and which is in its nature non-teleological, and another with which logic deals which is guided by the ideal of consistency, and therefore is teleological in its nature. All thought is teleologi-

cal. Psychology deals with the thought which fails to attain its end or attains ends inconsistent with each other, as well as with thoughts which are consistent in the means adopted and in the end attained. It is the business of logic to critically investigate the latter characteristic of the psychological life, and to make explicit the conditions realised and operative in the processes of correct reasoning.

Further, the reduction of mental development to one single type or kind of process tends to lay the whole emphasis upon instruction in educational method, and to conceive of the end of education as a building up and cementing together of various separate and discrete facts. Nay, it must do so, if it keep strictly to its presuppositions; for training and discipline of the mind can find no place in the Herbartian theory, and are terms which do not strictly belong to the Herbartian vocabulary. The Herbartian may, if he will, speak of regulating the movements among the various presentation masses, but not of training or discipline. And why? Because, apart from its content of single ideas and complexes of ideas,

the soul is nothing ; there is no activity except the activity manifested by the actions and reactions set up among the presentation masses. There are volitional movements, but no WILL. The latter is a mere abstract term for the particular movements. By one section of the school, as I have already mentioned, the above result has been logically reached ; and, if you keep strictly within the presuppositions of the theory, there can be no other result. The theory of *didactic materialism* lays the sole emphasis upon instruction in its educational method. It looks to the quantity of knowledge acquired rather than to its quality. It neglects the part which the child plays in education, and lays the whole responsibility upon the shoulders of the teacher for the ultimate result. And if education is a mere storing up of knowledge ;—of facts, however skilfully prepared and however skilfully assimilated (and this is the conception and the only conception of Education which can be logically built up on a system of psychology such as Herbart's), this is the only possible outcome. The chief and

only function of the teacher becomes to impart the right knowledge at the right time, and the practical rules of method for his guidance reduce themselves to two: (1) Find out the ideas which the child already possesses; and (2) Present the new material in the manner and form in which it can be most readily assimilated and fused with the previously existing store.

But the Herbartian may reply: What about the *five formal steps* of method which form an integral and fundamental part in the theory? There we have the various stages of a method laid down which not only includes instruction but also takes account of the training and discipline of the mind. In the associating and systematising and applying of the knowledge gained the Herbartian takes into account more than mere instruction. There can be no education without instruction, but instruction is not alone sufficient, and this the Herbartian admits. That is true; but the question is, How are we to explain this training and disciplinary process? Herbart has done away with reason, with faculties, and has left us with nothing but



the bare ideas to work with. What is to be trained? What are we to apply? If the soul is nothing, if there is no reason-process, there can be nothing to train, nothing to discipline. All that the third and fourth steps;—the stages of associating and systematising the knowledge given, can mean is that they are further stages in the preparation of the materials to be assimilated. We have first a process of rude and crude assimilation, followed by a more refined and delicate process of the same nature; and application can only mean the method by which you set this or that piece of the self-acting machinery in motion. A monomaniac is a good example of this. Introduce, directly or indirectly, any allusion to, say, bimetallism, and the machinery is set in motion. He will talk wisely and at length upon the subject, but the whole process has been set up and goes on independently of his control. This is no exaggeration, it is simply the logical outcome of any theory which makes ideas, their combination and their inter-action the sole elements of the mental life; the stream of consciousness is a stream over which we have no

control; it may divert this way or that, bifurcate at this or that point, but it moves on without our regulation, and its diverting or bifurcating are determined wholly by external influences.

We may grant with Herbart that the child has at first no will, that he is swayed hither and thither by every given impulse, that he acts upon the presentation of any new object or idea in this mechanical way; but the mere adding on of idea to idea, the making more and more extensive the circle of ideas only perfects the machinery along certain directed lines. If you begin by conceiving the mental life in this mechanical way, mental progress can only mean the making more perfect and more complete the machinery, and we must conceive of the educator's function as one of skilfully building up the fabric of knowledge, and that is all.

The child's will is weak in early youth, because the means necessary for the attainment of its ends is relatively weak. His curiosity is boundless, but his stock of ideas by which to interpret this world of wonder is insufficient for the purpose. The teacher's function is not merely to

- } add to the knowledge of the child, but to  
direct and control this purposed activity.  
Strength of will is strength of purpose,  
- } and this is not a function varying with  
the varying width and extent of our  
system of ideas. In fact, the opposite is  
more truly the case in actual experience.  
Singleness of aim and strength of purpose  
depend on the narrowing of our aims and  
the limiting of our knowledge to one  
particular sphere.

Along with this over-valuing of instruction we have the under-estimation, and, in some cases, the almost total neglect of formal studies in the work of education, and the denial of the worth of such studies in the training of the mind and in the formation of character. This is the only logical outcome of a theory which holds that knowledge is a mere collection of facts bound together by one single kind of bond. It is best exemplified in the development of the theory by Ziller. Insisting on the fact that the aim of education is ethical, and following out the presupposition of the Herbartian psychology that the one and only way to reach this result is by means of instruc-

tion, by adding knowledge to knowledge, the question comes to be for Ziller, what subject or subjects have most moral content, and are on that account best suited for character-building? History and literature, of course, answer these tests, and so become the core round which all other instruction is centred. Hence also it follows that since a knowledge of nature is not directly or intrinsically moral, science and nature-studies are relegated to a subordinate place in the school curriculum. Moreover, since abstract science, and mathematics in particular, besides having no direct moral content as regards their subject-matter, do not increase our store of knowledge to any great extent, this furnishes an additional reason for regarding these subjects as of only secondary importance in the work of Education.

Now, in this contention of the Herbartians that humanistic subjects, dealing as they do with the thoughts and actions of men and women, have greater educational value in the work of forming moral character than naturalistic studies, there is much truth intermingled with much error. And the truth is the truth for reasons of a kind

altogether different from those usually advanced by the orthodox and consistent Herbartian.

To take the errors first: History and literature as mere collections of facts, as mere material for the building up of apperception masses, are not as regards their content necessarily moral or immoral. As facts, as knowledge, they are exactly on the same footing as knowledge of any other kind. It is the end or purpose to which the facts are put that determines whether or not they have moral worth, and so be made instrumental in the moral education of the child. These subjects become instrumental in the work of moral education and in the building up of character, because their subject-matter furnishes material upon which we can pass judgments of approval or disapproval; and in order to attain this we must not only instruct our pupils in the facts of history and of literature, but also train them to evaluate the facts recorded in history and the emotions portrayed and the actions displayed in literature by some recognised end or ideal. Further, these

subjects are of value in education, because they directly tend to cultivate the imagination and to foster certain emotions, the predominancy of which is necessary for the ethical and social stability of society. That is, it is not on account of their mere instruction-value that these subjects are of so much importance in education, but because they furnish the means of training the mind to a knowledge of principles of a particular kind, and of directing the will of the pupil to the pursuit of certain definite ends. For example, the aim of teaching history is not to store the mind with a list of kings who have governed a particular country, together with a record of the wars, treaties, and reforms which have taken place in the course of its historical development, but by means of the facts to cultivate certain emotions (*e.g.* patriotism), of social and moral worth ; to train the pupil to critically estimate and judge of the actions recorded, and finally to make him understand the institutions under which he is born, and which have gone to make us what we are. And, above all, it should be the aim of all history teaching to make the pupil realise



in some degree that these ethical and social institutions have been won for us by the long travail of the human spirit, by the labour and sweat of our forefathers, and that it is his and our duty to maintain, improve, and further these outward and visible instruments by which man realises his spiritual nature, and which are but the means by which he satisfies his inmost and deepest needs.

And what is true of history is also true of literature. It is because literature furnishes a training and discipline of a peculiarly valuable kind that it derives its importance in education, and not because it is a subject which lends itself to easy instruction, to easy assimilation. It is as a critical study of the fundamental emotions of our human nature, as a portrayal of the various types of character that have manifested themselves, and will ever manifest themselves in the history of the world, that literature is valuable as a means of educational discipline. For example, Shakespeare's men and women are men and women not of his time only but of all time: the Hamlets, the Macbeths, the man of fine intellectual tastes and

artistic temperament, but of weak moral will, such as is portrayed in the character of Richard II., are men who mingle with us in our everyday life: the tragedies of their lives are still tragedies that are being worked out in the lives of men and women of our own time. It is in the imaginative realisation of these things, in pondering over the lessons which literature teaches, in directing our conduct to worthy, and in restraining it from ignoble and unworthy, ends that the subject is of educational importance. It is, then, mainly for their training and disciplinary value that history and literature are of so much educational importance, and not from the fact that they are subjects which can be most readily employed in the building up of knowledge.

Again: The distinction between Real and Formal in education, and in the subjects of education, is a difference of aspect and not of kind. There are no subjects which merely instruct and do not train. True, you may teach any and every subject in such a way as to neglect altogether the work of training, and reduce it to the mere connecting of the

facts by their accidental time and space relations. In like manner, there are no subjects which merely train and do not instruct or give knowledge. Every subject has a twofold value—a value as furnishing some kind of useful knowledge and a value as furnishing a training and discipline of a particular and peculiar kind, and the aim in education should be so to teach each subject as to give it the greatest instruction value, and also at the same time to afford the best training. In other words, it is not a mere knowledge of facts but a knowledge of principles which is important, and the latter is the result of training. Facts are necessary, but it is in the training of the pupil to perceive the binding links or principles between and behind the facts, and in the evoking of the self-activity of the pupil in the application of the principles so reached, that the ultimate aim of education in any particular subject is reached. Now the Herbartian, since he conceives of mental development as governed throughout by one kind of process, and since he denies any activity of Reason in the work of building up knowledge, is logically forced to lay the

chief emphasis upon the instructional side of education ; and in the theory there is logically no place for formal studies. When these are introduced into the system they are inconsistent with the fundamental assumption of the Herbartian psychology. If we are ever to reconcile the contending claims of formal and real studies, we shall have to get rid of a theory of the mental life, which reduces all knowledge to a process of assimilation between the various particular facts. We must realise clearly that Herbart has only given us an account, in terms of mechanical causation, of what Kant<sup>1</sup> meant by a mere animal or perceptual consciousness, and what Professor Laurie<sup>2</sup> has not inaptly called the "Attuitional" consciousness, in which subjective sensations and sense perceptions connect themselves in a more or less accidental way by association. This must be distinguished from an objective or rational consciousness, in which reason is throughout active in the interpretation and reconstruction of the sense data furnished by means of the psycho-physical organism.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paulsen's "Kant," p. 156 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Laurie's "Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta," also "Institutes of Education," Part II. Lecture I.

Knowledge is not a mere collection of facts bound together by one single kind of bond, but consists in the understanding of the identities which underlie the various facts; and the work of reason manifests itself in the perception of these various identities, and in the endeavour to bind together the various facts into systems, into rationally connected wholes. But the Herbartian contention that instruction and not training and discipline of the mind is of primary importance involves a fallacy to which I have already alluded. This fallacy consists in the assumption that there is such a thing as *mere* training—a *mere* developing of power or faculty which, once gained, is of value in the understanding of subjects generally. Now there is no such thing as a mere formal training of the reason, except in so far as the power of concentrating attention upon any one subject, and the habit of close and exact reasoning in any one study may enable us to do so in some other direction. The habit of close reasoning, of exact observation, or of accurate perception may be extended to other objects of investigation, but the power so gained will not enable



us to understand another system of facts, except in so far as the new system is identical in kind with the former. In all understanding, in all interpretation, there must be a system of ideas by means of which the new is interpreted, and the formation of any one system will only enable us to interpret facts of a different nature in so far as the facts are similar in nature in both cases. For example, in Mathematics we are training our pupils to the exact discrimination of spatial and quantitative relations generally, and in so doing we are at the same time forming a system of ideas of the same nature; but this system of ideas will not enable them to understand the ethical, social, and economic worlds, except in so far as these worlds and their relations can be expressed in quantitative terms. Similarly, a training in Classics will not aid the pupil in the explanation of knowledge of another kind, except in so far as the instruction gained thereby can be used in the explanation of other facts. This is a truth which needs emphasising at the present day, when our school curriculums, from various causes, tend



to become over-crowded with subjects. Knowledge is not a mere collection of facts connected only by their artificial time and space relations, and this is what mere memorising means, but a system of ideas internally connected by the bond of identity; and unless we succeed in forming such systems, internally coherent and as comprehensive as possible, then the result of our educational efforts is to turn out mere smatterers instead of educated men and women. Now the Herbartian theory, while insisting on this fact, that knowledge is system, and that the formation of any one system will enable us to interpret facts belonging to other and diverse systems only in so far as there is an identity of content between the apperceiving systems and the new presentates, wrongly conceives the mode by which the various systems are formed: it is consequently unable to reconcile the claims of those who, on the one hand, emphasise the importance of instruction, and, on the other hand, those who lay the stress upon the formal and disciplinary side of education.

A recent writer has lately essayed this reconciliation by means of a phrase. He

tells us in language which is to me unintelligible that "mental life, like animal life, must be rhythmic. At one moment, there must be an aggressive forward-moving, 'heuristic' pulsation; at another moment there must be calm assimilation."<sup>1</sup> But to speak thus is to pretend, under cover of a phrase, to say something, and in reality to say nothing. What is meant by the rhythm of the mental life? by the moments of "heuristic" pulsation and of calm assimilation? What is the characteristic of the heuristic forward movement, and what and how is it different from the other and opposed moment of calm assimilation? An answer to these questions would inevitably lead to the rejection of the Herbartian psychology as an inadequate, abstract, and one-sided account of the mental life, and, as a consequence, involve its rejection as a basis for a sound and safe theory of education. In the human consciousness we approach the moment of "calm assimilation," when the activity of reason is at a minimum, when we merely note or become aware of the existence of

<sup>1</sup> "The Student's Herbart," p. 26.

the facts presented to us through the medium of the senses; we are then approximating to the stage of the mere passive reception of material, and the complete realisation of this particular stage is never actually attained in our waking consciousness. The characteristic mark of this stage is the low energy of the activity of reason, which is employed in the bare connecting of the various facts by their most obvious and superficial relations. The other movement, the heuristic movement, is characterised by the activity of reason, by the eager, earnest searching into the causes and relations of the various facts, and in the endeavour to reduce the whole to a rational unity. Here again, in the theory of the mental life which has been indicated rather than adequately worked out in these lectures, it is the teleological aspect of the process of knowing which is of primary importance. As a consequence it is in the evoking of the activity of reason, in the training to a knowledge of principles, and the disciplining of the pupil to the self-application of these principles for the explanation and the understanding of the

facts of his natural and social worlds, which is of primary importance in the work of education. Because the principles are embodied in the facts, instruction is necessary as a stage in the final result; but it is in the leading of the pupil to the self-finding and to the self-applying of these principles that the work of education primarily consists. Progress in science, progress in knowledge generally, is the gradually coming to know and to understand better the principles which determine change in the worlds of nature and society; the finding in what at first sight seems an unintelligible chaos, a world of order, a rational cosmos; and throughout the whole process, human reason has been ever active, as end and process, in the reducing to itself and so understanding the Divine Reason which manifests itself in the sphere of nature and in the sphere of social relations.

All education, then, involves the twofold process of instructing and of training and disciplining the mind; but we can only thoroughly justify the position by a theory of the mental life which shows us this twofold process in active operation

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throughout the whole process of mental development. Everywhere in the mental life, whether in the world which we come to know by means of the outward senses or in the inner world which we come to know by means of reflection—the world of emotion, of feeling, of desire—we have a “given” which we find and did not make; and everywhere we find that for the understanding of these worlds of nature and of feeling an activity of reason is necessary; that Reason ever seeks to interpret this given, to reduce it to unity, to find and understand the meaning and purpose of the world. And since all intellectual process has this two-fold aspect, so the educative process must be similar in nature. And in realising this, we shall also become aware that the various subjects of education are but the more or less completed and more or less adequate results of what the human reason has already attained in its endeavour to understand the world and God’s ways of working; and as they are the result of human reason they must also embody the nature of that reason, and so have both a Real and a Formal

aspect. Of course, some subjects are better fitted at the school stage for training and disciplining the mind than others, and this, on the ground that the nature of the relations subsisting between the various facts, or the nature of the identity which pervades the whole system, is of a simple and easily recognisable nature. But the chief thing to insist on is that, even when we lay the chief emphasis upon the instructional value of a subject in the school curriculum, this can only be justified as the initial and preparatory stage for the subsequent analysis of the facts and their further synthetic reconstruction ; and further, that the facts should be so chosen at every stage that this analytic and synthetic process of reconstruction may be of such a nature as to be consistent with the stage of mental development of the child. Hence it is that the poetical and imaginative reconstructions of the world in which we live are the forms most appropriate in the early stages of education, and our theoretical reconstructions should be limited to the simpler forms, to the reconstruction of the obvious quantitative, qualitative, and causal aspects of the world.



## LECTURE V

### EDUCATIONAL APPLICATION OF HERBERTIANISM—CONCENTRATION OF STUDIES

ANOTHER characteristic of the Herbartian theory, which follows logically from the psychology on which it is based, is the extreme importance which is placed on the concentration or co-ordination of the subjects of instruction, and on the value of correlation in the teaching of facts belonging to apparently diverse spheres of knowledge. In this insistence on the importance of correlation, both in the subjects and methods of instruction, there is a more or less implicit assumption that correlation of studies is also one of the chief means for securing concentration of another kind. This fallacy has already been noted : it is that extent and internal coherency of knowledge is a necessary pre-condition for intensity of action. On the other hand, it is maintained in these lectures that the

latter factor depends on the emotional value which any particular end has for the individual, and that the width and intension of knowledge are merely conditions for the wise following out of any end, whatever the nature of the end may be. But before inquiring into the truth and error in this doctrine, let us first of all state and examine the reasons advanced for the importance of this factor in the work of education.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place, it is said that one of the aims or purposes of the correlation of studies is the promotion of the unity and consistency of the mental life. The various subjects of school study are usually taught as separate and discrete spheres of knowledge, and no attempt is made to bring out and bind together the various parts of knowledge. We build up in our pupils' minds vague and disjointed systems of ideas, and as a consequence they leave but little lasting impression, and have little effect on the formation of the character and will of the pupil. Now there is no doubt that this is true of a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rein's "Outlines of Pedagogics" (Eng. trans.), p. 103 *et seq.*; De Garmo's "Herbart," p. 115.

good deal of our present-day teaching. It is disjointed, scrappy, and badly knit together ; and it cannot be too strongly emphasised that wherever possible the various subjects of instruction should be correlated with each other. But in so doing, it is necessary to note the limitations to the doctrine of correlation, for when these are forgotten we have subject linked to subject, and lesson to lesson, by bonds of a more or less fanciful and imaginary nature. There is no doubt that in some quarters this linking has been carried to an excess, and has tended to obscure the real truth and value in the doctrine.

Against the contention that much of the instruction which we impart to our pupils is of a disjointed and unconnected nature, the answer is that, at the present stage of knowledge, this must necessarily be so. > We have not yet succeeded in unifying knowledge, in explicating and stating the nature of the identity which manifests itself amidst all differences ; and until this is more or less partially realised, our efforts at connecting the various branches of study in the school must be similarly

limited. Again, there is much in our knowledge which, so far as we can see at present, is of a purely contingent character. This is especially true of history, which the Herbartians seem inclined to place in the forefront as the most fruitful of all studies. In historical investigation, it is extremely difficult to determine the nature of the influences which are operative in historical change; and, until we can do so, our efforts at linking together the various facts, and determining the forces and causes at work in the various stages of the historical development of any particular country, or of the world generally, must be of a more or less tentative nature. Unless we can do so, the only bond which links one historical fact to another must be that of mere sequence in time. Again, although it is assumed that there must be a connection between the various facts of our natural and social worlds, we may say that we are as yet only beginning to understand these relations. Some enthusiasts would make Nature-study the centre of the circle of knowledge, and on this basis would have us reconstruct the whole social and

economic worlds ; but the method employed consists usually in making more or less fanciful and strained analogies between plant and animal life on the one hand, and human life and its various social inter-relations on the other. Connection of this sort, as a rule, depends on fertility of imagination in the individual, and not on the power of grasping and understanding the real connection between facts and events. Further, it must be admitted that there is no connection between the various facts with which several of the sciences deal. There is *e.g.* no connection between the spatial or extensive qualities of an object, and its physical and chemical properties, and the nature of the bond which links together the various natural sciences is of a more or less problematical character. Much more is this the case in humanistic studies. If, then, there is this want of unity between the various parts of our present knowledge, there must be a similar lack of unity and consistency in our instruction. The omission to note these obvious facts leads the extreme supporters of the doctrine of concentration into

making factitious connections, and thus, for the sake of arousing momentary and present interest, to cultivate the imaginative powers of the child at the expense of his reason. In this way they ultimately retard the acquisition of knowledge, which consists in the perception of the real relations existing between the facts of the natural and social worlds, of the real identities which are embodied in the various particulars. The only safe rule for the teacher is, that wherever there is or has been *real* relation between two facts, or groups of facts, the nature of the relation should be unfolded and enforced.

But even granting the limited importance of this factor in education, we have to inquire into the nature of the unity which is possible in the Herbartian theory. Now the only possible conception is that it is a unity of knowledge mechanically and externally effected on the mind. It is a unity made up by the linking together of part to part in a whole of knowledge mechanically conceived; and this conception of the unity of mind follows from looking at mental life from the



X point of view of the mere spectator. But the unity of our lives, in so far as they have been reduced to unity, is a unity (as I have frequently said) of purpose or end, to which the unity and consistency of knowledge is only a means. Knowledge which does not perform the function of enabling us better to realise the various ends of life is so much useless lumber. It must be turned to use if it is to have any value; and use is not to be confounded with mere utility. In other words, inter-connection of knowledge is only a means to the inter-connection of the purposes of life, and it is in the connecting of knowledge with the various ends of life that the theory of concentration is of value.

A second reason advanced for the importance of the correlation of studies is, that it is only by showing the inter-relation and inter-connection of the various subjects of instruction with the present practical "interests" of the pupil, that we can hope to arouse and maintain his interest in the present. "When the child finds in the subject matter of instruction," writes Professor De Garmo, "that which appeals to his own

thinking as valuable,"<sup>1</sup> then, and then only, is he genuinely interested; and Professor Adams, in his brightly written book on the Herbartian Psychology, has copiously illustrated this aspect of the theory: "To be interesting," he says, "a thing must find a natural place for itself in the cosmos of the child's mind. An entirely unknown thing can have no interest whatever for a child, or, indeed, for an adult."<sup>2</sup>

Now, every educationalist will agree that we should aim at showing the relation of the subjects of instruction to the various "interests" or ends of life, and that only in so far as we do so are we likely to leave any permanent result as the outcome of our educational efforts. But here again we must clearly distinguish between the mechanism by which interest works and interest itself, in the sense of seeking an end directly for its own sake, or indirectly for the sake of something else. Knowledge which bears upon the dominant ends and purposes of the individual life finds an apperceiving system which warmly welcomes it, and so we have the apper-

<sup>1</sup> "Herbart" (Great Educator Series), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> "The Herbartian Psychology," p. 272.

ceiving process set in operation, and consequently the hedonic tone, which is the mark of the presence of interest.

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Education, however, is not mainly concerned with the fostering and development of the present interests of the pupil, but in the creation and formation of *future* interests. It is the aim of education to fit the individual, intellectually, ethically, and practically, to fill his appropriate position in the social organism, and while what may interest in the present should, as far as possible, be made the basis for the formation and development of these future interests, this is not possible in many cases.

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In the first place, the educator must inhibit certain interests, pursuits, or ends of the child, and this, of course, can only be effectively done in so far as they are banished by the creation of other ends or pursuits. But in the creation of new "interests," and in the expulsion of "interests" of an evil and vicious nature, the mere imparting and correlating of knowledge are not alone sufficient. Unless we can make an effective appeal to the emotional nature of the child, our mere

instruction will be ineffective. It is in correlating the various subjects of study with the practical interests which *should* prevail and be dominant in the life of the child, and in making this the basis upon which to develop future "interests" of ethical and social worth that the real aim of education consists; and in order to reach this end much of our school work must be uninteresting, in the sense that the child can only partially realise the value or worth of the end sought, and of the means necessary to its attainment.

In the second place, education is not a mere imparting and assimilating of facts, but consists in the training of the pupil to perceive the relations between the various facts, to explicate the nature of the identity which pervades and manifests itself in any particular system of knowledge; and while the facts of instruction should be so presented as to make this identity in difference recognisable by the child, there is no *ethical* reason why this should be made an easy and agreeable process. The nature of the identity which pervades any system of knowledge is only made fully explicit by the earnest labours of many seekers

after truth ; and if we are to fit our pupils successfully to carry on the work of the world, we must habituate them in like manner, earnestly to search into the causes and inter-relations of things.

From the extreme position of presenting the facts of instruction, heedless of their inter-connection in a system and of their value in relation to the practical ends of life, we are in danger, through the influence of the Herbartian theory, of going to the other extreme, and of endeavouring to make the inter-connection so obvious and palpable, that there is no call for the active exercise of the reasoning powers of our pupils. But it is in the training of the child to perceive and apply the relations so discerned that the work of education mainly consists ; and in so doing we must, in many cases, subordinate present interest in order to create and foster a system of interests which will enable the child to correlate himself with the civilisation into which he is born.

A third reason advanced for the importance of concentration in the subjects of instruction is that only through the

concentration or co-ordination of knowledge is it possible to have strong, effective, and consistent action.<sup>1</sup> It is urged that if knowledge lies in detached and isolated portions, such knowledge can have little cumulative effect in determining conduct, and that there is, as a rule, in such cases a want of consistency between our various actions. Now one apperceptive system is dominant and now another, and as each acts in isolation, the resultant conduct is lacking in consistency. *If* we conceive of the contents of the mind as consisting wholly of apperceptive systems, and *if* the various volitions which occur are due solely to this inter-action of the various presentation masses, then we shall be logically bound to conclude that consistency and intensity of action can only be obtained by the interweaving of the various systems together; and that the more effectively we succeed in so doing, the more effectively shall we obtain the desired result of making our activity consistent and *mechanical*. But if, on the other hand, we deny that ideas and their inter-actions are the fundamental

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rein's "Outlines of Pedagogics," p. 103.



elements of the mental life and that feeling and volition are but secondary products of the inter-relations set up between presentation masses, then we shall have to conclude that the consistency of knowledge plays but a subordinate part in the consistency and unity of conduct, and that it is only a means to an end.

Consistency of conduct is consistency between the various ends of life. This is only possible in so far as there is inter-relation between the knowledge of the various means necessary to realise the particular ends; but while this inter-connection of knowledge is a means and a necessary means for the unity and consistency of the various purposes of life, it is not the only condition nor *the* necessary condition without which the unity of life is impossible. This unity consists in the unity and subordination of the various minor purposes of life to the *one* ethical purpose, however conceived and however interpreted; and once more it must be repeated that this unity can only be realised in so far as the supreme end of life has the greatest subjective worth to the individual.

Further, the real unification between the spheres of moral and intellectual education cannot be effected by showing the inter-connection between moral and intellectual instruction, but only by realising that the distinction between the intellectual and the spiritual purposes of life is not one of kind but of degree. The correlation of moral and intellectual instruction is a valuable means to the attainment of this result, but the real end can be attained only in so far as we ethically train our pupils to see the manifestation of reason, both in the world of Nature and of social relations.

In addition to these theoretical reasons for the necessity of correlating the various subjects of school instruction, there are various practical reasons which are of importance. By showing the inter-relation of the various branches of study, we aid the child in the better understanding and comprehension of the facts. The greater number of inter-relations we can establish between any given fact, and the corresponding system or systems of knowledge, the more it is known ; for knowledge

is essentially system. A fact becomes known only in so far as it can be related within this or that particular system, and the ultimate aim of knowledge would be realised if any particular fact could be shown in its inter-relation with the system as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the inter-relation of the various facts helps in the retention and reproduction of knowledge. This arises on account of the increase in the number of associations, and tends to produce what Dr. Stout calls a ready or serviceable memory.<sup>2</sup> But in the connecting of fact with fact, and in training the child to perceive the identity between the various parts of knowledge, there is a distinct tendency in the present day to make connections of a fanciful and imaginary kind, and such connections, as I have already pointed out, cultivate the imagination of the child at the expense of his reason. It cannot be too strongly insisted on, that knowledge consists in the perception of the *real* relations existing in our natural and social worlds, and that the endeavour to discover and state their nature is, and has

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Welton's "Logical Basis of Education," chap. i.

<sup>2</sup> "Manual of Psychology," p. 441.

been, the work of reason, and that imaginative bonds of connection are legitimate only as a stage in the process of knowing. Again, the correlation of the various subjects of instruction is valuable as a means for arousing present interest, and so is useful as a means for evoking and maintaining the active attention of the child. But here again care must be taken that present interest is not employed at the expense of the real understanding of the subject. Lastly, the correlation of the various subjects of instruction is more or less a necessity for securing unity of result in our educational efforts. This unity, however, can only be effected when our school curricula are determined, not, as nowadays, by the more or less capricious demands of the public, but by a theory of the end at which education should aim, and of the relative value of the subjects in contributing to this end.

The failure to take account of the obvious limitations in our present knowledge, and the erroneous conception of knowledge as a mechanical linking together of originally separate and discrete units, together with the confusion of consistency in knowledge

with consistency in the ends or purposes of life, has tended to the exaggeration of the value of correlating the subjects of instruction. This is manifest in the various futile attempts by professed Herbartians (and more so in the efforts of the dilettanti in educational theory) to find some one subject of instruction which may serve as the centre or core of all our educational efforts. Some would make history the central subject of every school curriculum ; others set forth in glowing terms the importance of Nature-study as the basis upon which to rear all knowledge, while one educationalist has had the temerity to advance the claim of hygiene as the subject most worthy to fill this exalted position. Extravagances of this sort are scarcely worthy of serious mention : they indicate such a lack of comprehension of the general trend of present-day philosophical thought as scarcely to merit criticism, were it not that such conceptions influence more or less the practical direction of educational activity. It may safely be affirmed, however, that the endeavour to find such a one centre or core of instruction will partake of a conjectural and imaginary character as

long as our efforts to see the universe as a whole and as a unity remain imperfect and incomplete. This incompleteness and imperfection in our scientific and philosophical knowledge must always infect our educational endeavours to teach the various subjects of instruction as a unity, and so limit the application of the doctrine of correlation of subjects.

But in another sense the theory of concentration points out an important truth for the educator, and that is in the contention that some subjects are more valuable in the education of the child than others. If we take as the basis of our principle of concentration, not the subjects which are of most value as furnishing materials easy of assimilation but those which are of most worth for the development of the ethical and spiritual nature of the child, then there can be no doubt that *humanistic* studies, dealing as they do with the life of man as an ethical and social being, should occupy the central position in education. *Naturalistic* studies, which have for their main aim the fitting of the individual to understand better the conditions of the natural world in which he lives, and



thereby to put him into intelligent relation with his environment (and so, among other results, to improve his economic efficiency as a worker), while they must ever retain an important place in educational curricula, must always be subordinate in value to those disciplines which fit the individual to occupy his place as a member of a social and ethical organism.

The theory of concentration, however, enforces the practical lesson, that the various sciences which have to do with our natural world should be so taught that the teaching of one may aid in the understanding and comprehension of the others ; but we must remember that each science deals with Nature from one aspect, and that the inter-relation of the various aspects is not a question which has been definitely settled for all time. In a similar manner humanistic studies should be inter-related with each other, and whenever and wherever the facts of nature are determining agents in the production of economic or social changes the connections should be made obvious. The warning furnished to the practical teacher is to beware of bonds of an imaginary nature, and to be

sure that there is, or has been, a real connection between the facts which he seeks to conjoin.

Much more might be said in criticism of the Herbartian theory, and at some future time I hope to be able to say something upon the place and importance of the doctrine of "culture stages" in education, a theory which, although not peculiar to Herbartian writers, is closely connected with the subject of concentration in the writings of Ziller and of Professor Rein of Jena.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile I must conclude with the re-statement of the position, that the fundamental fallacy of the Herbartian school is the emphasis which it lays upon instruction. In opposition to this view, it is maintained that instruction is only the initiatory and preparatory stage; that it is in the training of the pupil to a knowledge of the relations embodied in the facts, and in the disciplining him to the self-application of principles, that the work of education really consists. This is true not merely in the narrower sphere which we call theoretical, but applies in every sphere of activity, ethical or practical. Further,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rein, "Outlines of Pedagogics."

I have shown that this error is due to the psychological basis on which the theory is founded, and the first thing we have to do is to become fully aware of this, and to realise that empirical psychologies, whether that of Herbart or of other writers, can give us only partial guidance in our educational efforts. It is the ends or purposes of life which determine and organise our experience, and as a consequence, when we are endeavouring to trace the development of the consciousness of a child, we are driven away from the point of view which is called "Presentationism." Educational principles, therefore, must be based on some theory of the mental life which takes into account not merely the *empirical*, but also the *rational* factor in the process of development; and since, as we have seen, the Herbartian psychology wholly neglects the latter, it must be rejected as a ground on which to found the theory and art of Education.

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